


**EXPERIMENTAL
CINEMA**

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EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA



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EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA

1930-1934

Complete edition in one volume

Introduction by Dr. George Amberg



ARNO PRESS * NEW YORK

A Publishing and Library Service of The New York Times

Arno Series of Contemporary Art No. 36
Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 70-103816
Manufactured in the United States of America
by Arno Press Inc., 1969

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. George Amberg

"Experimental cinema" is a term of many meanings and implications. Signifying at once protest and assertion, defiance and achievement, it is generally associated with the *avant-garde*, from the early surrealist provocations to the latest underground outrages. It also implies freedom from commercial considerations and independence from the impositions of studio policy. At its best, it is an honest test of a film-maker's creative vision; at its worst, a device for getting undeserved attention. Whatever the motivation, novelty has no merit for its own sake. Inevitably, in the natural course of events, the experiment of yesterday becomes the fashion of today and the routine of tomorrow. What is genuine is absorbed, what is spurious is discarded, until the sifting process is completed. Nearly forty years since its inception, *Experimental Cinema* provides fascinating documentary evidence for this selective function in film history.

The customary, restrictive usage of the term, *experimental*, requires the qualification that experimental cinema is not the exclusive prerogative of the *avant-garde*. From long-range view, the whole development of the cinema is the result of continual experimentation within the establishment, often as radical and daring as any of the discoveries of the self-styled independents. Chosen at random, the names of Méliès or Porter, Griffith or Welles, Von Stroheim or Resnais, Murnau or Fellini, Eisenstein or Dovzhenko, represent the momentous modifications and innovations that have actually made the history of the motion picture. This, especially, is the area of interest of *Experimental Cinema*. It was not conceived as an organ for the *avant-garde* but as a critical advocate for cinematic progress wherever and whenever it occurred.

Historical perspective provides us with the wisdom of hindsight and induces the arrogance of foresight, as any critical evaluation of the great

Soviet film-makers can prove. Although the debate has lost some of the particular polemical tone that once animated it, the merit or demerit of montage is still intensely argued, still vital and acute enough to have appeared as a key concept in André Bazin's aesthetic discourse. The primary reason is that the Soviet directors were not contented with creating films of unquestionable excellence and force, but also insisted on validating and vindicating their achievements with elaborate theoretical understructures. While the former sustain their undiminished reputation, the latter never cease to provoke controversy. The contributors to *Experimental Cinema* argued the absolute superiority of the Soviet cinema on three relevant grounds: unqualified acceptance of the Russian films as unequalled works of art; recognition of the unequivocal validity of the montage principle; and acknowledgement of the indisputable rightness of dialectical materialism. As a matter of course, according to specialist credo, the three components are interdependent and indivisible.

Throughout many years, owing to the implicit orthodoxy, the discussion of the Soviet cinema tended to veer from aesthetic values to political ideology, from structural analysis to the dialectic of montage, from consideration of content to the effectiveness of socialist propaganda. Emotional charge has frequently blunted the clarity of vision and the precision of rational argument, although the pervasive political doctrine is one of the Russian films least persuasive qualities, in fact, the only one that dates them. This is precisely what characterizes the prevailing tenor of *Experimental Cinema*. Its extraordinary interest for the historian and scholar resides, paradoxically, more in its ideological obsolescence than in its aesthetic and philosophical affirmations.

In 1930, any critical comment, any value judgment, concerning the Soviet cinema, implicitly

involved a taking of sides, if not a political commitment. The position adopted and advocated by *Experimental Cinema* was unequivocally socialist, dedicated to the support of "the first workers' film group in America" and *The American Prolet-Kino*, abortive projects both. In the magazine's third issue, Seymour Stern proclaimed that "the cinema is the most powerful instrument devised by mankind for the expression, in highly concentrated form, of the dialectic world-struggle of the classes . . . No other means or agency of expression has one-tenth the power of the cinema for creating consciousness (visual and auditory) of the dialectics of world-history in proper time and space perspective." Within its confined, ideological perimeter, this statement has considerable strength as well as the ring of honest conviction. By the same token, though, such militant commitment brooks no compromise and allows for no alternatives, either ideological or aesthetic.

True to socialist practice, *Experimental Cinema* did not recognize or even tolerate any possible alternative purpose or function of the cinema, a rigidity which discredited rather than affirmed the stability of their ideological assumptions. Seymour Stern's proclamation as well as many similar contributions, clearly reveal that the ultimate issue was not so much a question of artistic standards as one of socialism versus capitalism, of nationalized against industrialized production. The pity of it was that this impassioned group of young writers, critics and film-makers pursued an idealistic, socio-political goal, although with more enthusiasm than impact. The brilliant first wave of Soviet films deluded them into the belief that the "right" kind of political doctrine, that is dialectical materialism, cannot fail to produce the "right" kind of art, that is social realism. We are the unhappier for knowing better.

Ideologies aside, the Soviet films were incomparably superior to the majority of the world productions in 1930. Nevertheless, it was the year

of *City Lights*, *The Blue Angel*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *L'Age d'Or*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*, at least respectable works, though hardly of the same sustained power, uncompromising intensity and manifest social significance as the Russian imports. Moreover, under the uninspired Hoover administration, the country had scarcely started to recover from the Stock Market crash while the film industry had barely adjusted to the development of sound. Yet, in the midst of the Great Depression, the Hollywood industry was conspicuously, even ostentatiously, booming. The fighting tactics of *Experimental Cinema* were provocative, emotional and militant, rather than efficient, rational and politic which, although speaking altogether in their favor, also accounts for their failure. They were rightfully outraged by the world-wide success of the escapist mediocrity of the Hollywood productions and, more personally, by the concomitant attempt to suppress the Soviet imports. It required no socialist rationale to condemn Hollywood corruption, both moral and artistic.

Although *Experimental Cinema* hardly represents the only group of "dialectic-minded thinkers" of the 'thirties, attempting to carry social or socialist polemic into the prevailing public apathy, it was the only one single-mindedly dedicated to class-conscious, socially aware cinema. Active ferment in an arid soil, the magazine and its high aspirations were doomed to fail. However, as a source of first-hand information, the short-lived magazine is invaluable. It contains a large amount of analytical material concerned with film theory, film form, film language and, particularly, montage, with lively contributions from young American writers as well as from Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko. The prevalence of Soviet-inspired thinking conveys a sense of authenticity to the arguments pro and con. Eventually what emerges with singular force, is a priceless document of a time and a place, a mood and a spirit.

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FEBRUARY 1930

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Experimental Cinema, published by the Cinema Crafters of America, is the only magazine in the United States devoted to the principles of the art of the motion picture. It believes there is profound need at this time for a central organ to consolidate and orient those individuals and groups scattered throughout America, Europe and U. S. S. R. that are working to liberate the cinema from its stereotyped symbolism. It believes the time has come for wide critical and creative support of these isolated movements not only from the point of view of the spectator but also from the point of view of the creator, and it is the intention to experiment with new forms and to introduce to the spectator and creator the leading ideas and principles of the new film world. Experimental Cinema will be a forum where the work of directors and creators such as S. Eisenstein, W. Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, C. Dreyer, Konzinstoff, Trauberg, E. Pommer, J. Feyder, B. Rahn, A. Cavalcanti, Mann Ray, M. Allegret, E. Deslaw, Pabst, J. Epstein, Rene Claire, A. Room, Lubitsch, Griffith, Stroheim, Vidor, Seastrom, Chaplin, Flaherty, von Sternberg and others will be discussed. There will also be criticism, analysis, and scenarios by internationally known men such as A. Bakshy, L. Moussinac, R. Aron, H. Potamkin, Seymour Stern, J. Lenauer, L. Bunuel, R. Desnos, R. Aldrich, Syd S. Salt, and others. Experimental Cinema as the advance guard of a new motion picture art believes it will be the nucleus of a profound and vital force toward the creation of a world-wide cinema ideology. It appeals to you to support this unique experiment.

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THE NEW CINEMA

It is one of the strange paradoxes of our time that the nineteenth century while trying in various ways to eliminate the mysterious and along with it *mystery* itself from the universe, at its close bequeathed to the twentieth, what is perhaps one of the greatest single forces that history will record, for imbuing immense masses of people with that concentrated mystic fervour which the church was once able to inspire in its devotees — the cinema, silent conqueror of space, time and causality. In a remarkable communication concerning the machine in modern civilization written by Elva de Pue and published as an appendix by Waldo Frank in "The Rediscovery of America", Miss Elva de Pue writes that "the movie alone which tells one people in a universal language about the life of other peoples, however banal its initial stammering language, must in the end draw them closer together than even the mystery which they gathered of yore in magnificent cathedrals which pointed them away from the earth and its values, the earth which they were forced temporarily to deny. In a world filled with the stench of gangrened wounds; in a world filled with the stench of sewage gathering in moats; in a world filled with plague, that plague which eventually was a factor in the loss of belief in a merciful God: no incense could disguise those stenches. No great bells and no calm glory of intoning could drown the cries of brutalized underlings tortured by their masters, lay and clerical. In that dark world the dependence upon another life was necessary as a compensation, as salvation from despair." Today, particularly in America, at a time when there is everywhere desire to escape the perils and the problems of a mechanical age, at a time when it has become almost fashionable to fall back into traditional positions, beaten paths off the main road, without even attempt at analysis or *positive* statement of the problems of mechanism as to their social, political or psychological elements, and in this sense, the humanism of those who look back to New England for authority, is as far away from the actual problems of the American scene as the humanitarianism of those who look forward to U. S. S. R. for a point of reference. At a time like this, there is exigent need of a *force* powerful enough to assist in the presentation of these problems, socially, politically, psychologically, and if possible to transform them to meet the realities of the time, realities deeply implanted by the revelations of modern science. That *force* itself can be nothing other than a mechanism, a machine. Anything other than the machine is impotent in the face of so much machinery to orient. Such a *force* is the motion picture machine which throws its light from one end of the world to the other and back in an instant, "that tells one people in a universal language about the life of other peoples however banal its initial stammering language" may be. The motion pic-

ture camera — which in the control of man is the cinema with a subject matter as wide as the universe and an understanding as great as nature, and in the control of men of genius — the cinema of Greed, Gold Rush, Theresa Raquin, Potemkin, End of St. Petersburg, New Babylon, Passion of Joan, Arsenal and the boundless potentialities of the new cinema of the future with its explorations into the legends and myths of the new age of the machine. This is the *devotional* cinema that is traversing with the speed of light and opening up to the masses, the mysteries of the new universe of modern physics, bounded yet limitless, almost in answer to the prayer for an interpretation of man's changing relationship with man and his ultimate position in the universe that will be something more than "isms" at the end of words or stultifying mechanical noise. The New Cinema — profound creator of free will and knowledge absolute — with the power of transmuting water into wine and thence to bread and back again to water should it choose to do so, wherein the fabled mountain to extend a metaphor, not only goes to Mahomet but to heaven as well to bring back the ghosts of all those slain in the name of Mohammedism; wherein Narcissus slips into the pool and finds himself being unreeled in the form of a flower that blooms to a fountain sprouting blood in streams as high as Betelgeuse — with no return to earth, defying gravities. In Cinema— Faust has reappeared on the thirteenth stroke of the clock, in new guise, to perpetuate the eternal alchemy that cannot be denied to spirit; the faustian soul has drunk deep of the new elixir and is appeased in cinema; for here is a new world of miracle wherein all is solved and sufficient; wherein every wish is granted; every hope fulfilled; wherein to conceive is to execute and execution — revelation. One receives in the words of a modern french cinematographer and poet: "A trolley car on the chest. An auto in the back. A trapdoor under foot. One has a tunnel in his eyes and rises to the fifteenth floor drawn by the hair. All this while smoking a pipe with the hands at the faucet . . . A storm tears out your tonsils, a cry passes thru you like the shadow of an iceberg" (*Cendrars*). Time is no more; the temporal becomes transformed into a timeless, ageless world; an incident occurs and later reoccurs at the same place and at the same moment in relation to past or future incidents. A smokestack falls and in an instant is resurrected to its former position. Two trains meet on one track and fly over each other with the grace of gods. Man has conquered the air without wing, in cinema; and the atom has finally given up its precious secret; of myths like these is born a great ideal. This is the subject of cinema, as all things are the subject of cinema; there is nothing it cannot transfix into a moment of beauty that no other agency can match so marvelously well; there is no

message it cannot immortalize in memorable moving pictures; it has in its sixth sense the power to penetrate so deeply into the mystery of reality because of the *instantaneity of vision* the camera gives, that all other media become pallid along side it. In Cinema, emotion, is caught and fixed at the very moment it is felt, in all its purity. Things are conceived as they are perceived; to think is to act. In that lies the *omnipotence* of the medium. This is the new cinema. And because it contains in its heart the very essence of the modern spirit which in its deepest implications is as catholic and as elastic as life itself — a spirit that Montaigne a true humanist if ever there were one, would have understood were it revealed to him in the cinema only — it is vitally necessary to those of us today who cannot accept local or aloof positions at a time when man has it in his power to unite with man from one end of the world to the other for the first time in history. When painters, writers, philosophers, laymen in tune with this catholicism come to realize the *potentiality* of the cinema as powerful stimulus to creative activity much in the same light as the authority of the church of the thirteenth century served as bulwark for work in philosophy, stained glass cutting, woodcarving etc., then the *renaissance* we have been awaiting so impatiently will have come indeed.

David Platt.

Dynamic Composition

By ALEXANDER BAKSHY

IN so far as visual images constitute the basic material of the motion picture, the problem of cinematic composition is nothing else than the organization of these images in a sequential order. It is clear that there is more than one way of carrying out such an organization. The simplest and most obvious way is that of arranging the images in an order in which their content matter is used as so many connected links in the chain of representations which forms the narrative. In this case the actual form of images plays but a subordinate part, being at best, as in close-up, for instance, only the function of their representational content.

The motion picture as an art of story-telling has been principally concerned with supplying the spectator with such visual *information* as would ensure the desired intellectual and emotional reaction. At first, when the plots were simple and the technique still elementary, a straightforward stringing together of a series of scenes was all that was considered necessary for unfolding the story. Later, the more complicated stories and the greater detalization of images helped to bring into use the flashback and the parallel action, the two devices of cutting which introduced the method of intermittent composition. In this way the content matter of images became for the first time a formal element of cinematic composition. This formal character of the treatment of images, be it noted,

had nothing to do with their visual form; it was merely a means of organizing their content — a means which unquestionably has its origin in the peculiar mechanical structure of the motion picture, but which also has its analogues in other non-visual arts, as for example, in fiction and poetry.

During the last few years some very interesting attempts have been made in various countries, and particularly in Russia, to develop other methods of formal composition on the basis of image-content. The problem has been attacked from two different sides. On the one hand, experiments have been tried to establish a primary cinematic unit in the form of a group of images constructed somewhat on the lines of a grammatical sentence. Examples of this method are found in Eisenstein's "Ten Days that Shook the World" in which the use of symbols in the construction of various "figures of speech" deserves special notice. On the other hand, attempts have been made to base the composition of the film as a whole on such methods of formalised treatment of the image content as the arrangement of "rhymed" sequences with certain images recurring at definite intervals, or of whole cycles of sequences on the lines of a repeating pattern somewhat after the manner of certain verse forms. Dziga Vertov is considered in Russia as the head of this school of cinematic composition.

Side by side with the line of development just described which is based on the assumption that *the form of cinematic composition is the function of the sum total of its image content*, the history of the motion picture reveals another line of development which sometimes crosses the former and sometimes follows an independent course, and which proceeds from the assumption that *the content matter of a film is the function of its organized visual form*.

Ever since the first motion pictures were made it has been universally recognized that the cinematic visual image has one fundamental characteristic which distinguishes it from the visual images in other arts. This characteristic is movement. Although the term, particularly in its solemn guise of "dynamic quality", has acquired a sort of mystic halo, it is well to remember that it is essentially pragmatic in its origin and represents strictly definable properties of the motion picture mechanism. The men who made movies when the art was still new and unexplored, were not theorists. All they were concerned with was to give their pictures the semblance of life, and it took them but a short time to discover that a motionless object on the screen was as good as dead. Hence the orgy of recorded motion which distinguished the early movies.

It was at a comparatively early stage, too, that the necessity of movement not only in the characters and objects, but in whole scenes in relation to one another, was realised. Two reasons dictated this necessity. In the first place, there was the concentrated technique of cutting arising from the fragmentary nature of the film record, which had the effect not only of speeding up movement but also of compressing time. In certain situations this

latter effect was found to conflict rather too harshly with the sequence of events in *real* time. For instance, a scene showing a man in front of a street door, followed immediately by a scene showing the same man inside the house, is likely to produce the impression of something unreal. An interval of time is clearly demanded between the two scenes, and this is supplied by an interpolated third scene which may be a close up of the man, or the view of the room he is about to enter, or some other related subject. The method of parallel action is but an extended application of the same principle and achieves a similar effect of expanded time which sometimes, as in the climaxes of Griffith's pictures, is deliberately prolonged beyond even the realistic implications of the subject for a specific emotional effect.

The other and perhaps even more important reason for changing scenes and thus introducing a greater mobility of visual images, is found in the very character of realistic acting when it is used on the screen. In real life or on the stage speech itself constitutes action. A conversation between two persons may contain a series of events pregnant with dramatic significance, although the person speaking may engage in very little physical movement. On the screen the situation is different. Deprived of his words, even when these are present in the form of subtitles, the screen actor can express himself only by means of gesture and movement. But the naturalistic convention of acting excludes all but a few of these forms of expression. The inevitable result is that while the stage actor who uses speech can sustain a situation without a change in the setting for the length of a whole act, the screen actor finds his resources of expression exhausted within as short a time as a minute. It was to relieve the screen actor of this predicament and at the same time to give greater emphasis and variety to the means of expression, that long situations were reduced to a series of fragmentary scenes with long and medium shots, close-ups and "angles" thrown in for the sake of variety and emphasis. It is instructive to note that with the advent of talkies long scenes depending entirely on the dialogue and showing very little movement made their appearance on the screen. The fact that the latest talkies indicate a return to the technique of the silent picture with its short and fragmentary scenes, only goes to prove that the handling of dialogue on the screen is still far from being efficient and that the old "dynamic" form of composition wields a superior power of emotional appeal.

If the movement involved in the change from one scene to another brought to the fore the immediate significance of the form of the visual image, the movement resulting from a series of such changes organized in a manner conforming to a certain rhythmic scheme, placed the visual form in the position of the dominant factor in the building of cinematic composition. At this instance it is unnecessary to go into a description of the various methods of rhythmic organization of images beyond pointing to the work of Abel Gance, Leger and Murphy, Murnau, Eisenstein and Dovzhenko.

The important fact to be borne in mind is that cinematic rhythm is a form of visual composition which is itself charged with powerful emotional appeal and at the same time, while remaining independent of the image content, conveys and shapes the latter's appeal as well.

The effect of rhythm is to organize sequences of visible beats and accents. It establishes a visual continuity of intermittent images as a function of time. It leaves untouched, however, the problem of spacial continuity, of the spacial relationship of images to one another as elements of the visual cinematic composition. No pictures known to the writer have so far suggested a satisfactory solution of this problem. And yet so long as this problem remains unsolved the motion picture as a medium of dynamic visual art will never reach its complete maturity. [The continuity of visual form implies a dynamic composition of which the only existing illustration in other visual arts is found in the moving composition of ballet. Just as in the latter, the cinematic visual form has to be built in time, and its elements of composition should be not static images but lines of forces or movements in definite directions. It goes without saying that movement in this sense includes not only moving objects, nor movement of images in time only, but also their movement in space over the entire surface of the screen. The technical obstacles which still stand in the way of such dynamic composition are likely to be removed in the near future by the various announced devices for enlarged projection. In them therefore lies the promise of the mature cinema whose intellectual and emotional appeal will be the function of its dynamic composition.]

Film Problems of Soviet Russia

by HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN

BRYHER, assistant editor of *Close Up*, has just published (under the imprint of Pool, Territet, Switzerland) a book entitled, "Film Problems of Soviet Russia." The title is misleading, for the book is in reality a compendium of synopsis of Soviet Films, with some critical commentary, and data on directorial personalities, concluding with a chapter, from whose heading the book takes its name, on the British embargo of Russian motion pictures. The sole "problem" of the Russian film considered here is the non-cinematic problem of the British antagonism. Bryher's book is a plea for the recognition of the Russian cinema by England. She stresses not only the artistic merit of the Soviet kino, but urges that vital cinema upon the British intelligence as quite in accord ideologically with the social sentiments of the free Briton. This would seem to characterize Russian ideology as reformatory in its outlook, a quite acceptable middleman's social philosophy. This sums up the Russian social attack as entirely harmless. If that were so, the Russian film, informed by this assertive ideology, would lack the essential vigor which is its physical health. But

the Russian idea is dangerous, decidedly dangerous, to the prevailing acceptations. The dangerous idea creates the dangerous, or heroic, structure—ultimately.

The heroic structure, is not achieved spontaneously from the dangerous or heroic idea. Form is attained only by penetration and perseverance and discipline. By all three and not by any of these alone. The last two may create a style, perseverance a manner, the three together form. Form is the conception constantly *informing* the structure. To understand the problems of form in the cinema of the USSR, we must consider the components of the Russian social attitude.

The Russian social idea is composed of the following: the social-revolution, the criticism of the bourgeoisie, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the ultimate of collectivism, the re-education of the mass and the individual in the mass, the conquest of the egocentric mind. Each of these is identified with the other. The Russian film, confronting these social intentions, must solve its problems, its construction, with these as insistences and total experience or final "message." That the Soviet kino has been preoccupied with the integral national idea of collectivism is more than evident. The preoccupation has been called too facilely "propaganda," with its negative connotation of counter-art. But propaganda, when profoundly conceived and realized structurally in the form, is art. The Russian cinema, and the Swedish before it, have alone approximated form.

That the approximations have not as yet been extended into a completed structure is due to a number of disturbances, vacillations in the inclusive idea, which induce vacillations in structure. These vacillations are: the concern with the egocentric and the deflection from the relevant method. The latter refers to the failure to discover the correct conversion of a profound and inferential social material into motographic treatment. Or to put it more simply: the Russians persist, generally, in a method ill-suited to their material. The method is the American muscular movie, which served as initial instruction to the Soviet Cinema and which has persisted, in the work of Pudowkin especially, as the Russian medium, perfected beyond naive American uses. However, the Russians have recognized that this technique can go no further and, as Eisenstein has said, cannot satisfy the *reflective* processes. We begin to see the new and intrinsically Russian film in Dovzhenko's *Arsenal*. In this film the early Russian juxtaposition of the individual and his analogy (the simile) become, at least in intention, a structure of integrated symbolism with a new non-verbal continuity or logic. The symbol in the realistic structure—a simplism intended ultimately as a kino language—is substituted correctly by a structure incorporating the symbolic conversion of the realistic detail, such as the human personality. So is one problem of the Soviet cinema being met.

A vexing problem is that of the individual in the film, to what extent shall he be expressed? Russia is troubled by this matter, as the criticism dealt Protozanoff's *The Man from the Restau-*

rant testifies. Eisenstein, interviewed in France, has remarked with severity upon what he terms the retrogression in the Russian film, the back-step to the single personage. He adds, however, that this is only a momentary withdrawal for an accumulation of strength toward a further advance. To Eisenstein, the constructor of mass-film edifices, the intellectualist and classicist of the Russian film, complete objectivity is possible. He does not penetrate the individual and there is a question in my mind whether he has penetrated the social inference contained in the mass-expression. I await his rendering of the reflective. But to the other film makers of Russia, the individual is an experience. The problem becomes more simplified when we ask: how can the individual as an experience become the social idea as an experience? The answer is contained in a number of films: from Pudowkin to Dovzhenko. In these the treatment is not concerned with the narrative of the individual caught *pathetically* in the social morass, or fate—the German and American evasion of the social criticism contained in the plight of the individual (see *The Last Laugh* and *The Crowd*). The individual in *The End of St. Petersburg* and *Arsenal*, in *Storm over Asia* and *In Old Siberia*, is the concentration of the social force. For a moment one expected such concentration in *The Man from the Restaurant*, when the walk-out occurs, but the film disintegrates into a palpably American story of the rich villain and the young hero and pure heroine.

A third problem arises from the educational purpose of cinema production in Russia. How can this purpose be rendered cinematically? Eisenstein approaches this problem from the objectivity of the newsreel. A very delicate operation is involved, to subtilize the didactic. Nothing is impossible in the film, everything is its material. The problem is an intellectual one. That is where intellectuality enters the cinema.

A lesser problem, but an important one, is the criticism of the bourgeoisie. Up to the present that criticism has been mostly a too Dickensian caricature of certain gross types, not a revelation of basic errors which are expressed in vicious tendencies. In other words, types have been ridiculed, but the bourgeois ideology has not yet been criticised. An attempt at organizing a critique condemnation is the sequence of two conducts, such as, men dying in battle, the exploiter indulging his appetite. This is, of course, elementary, but it is necessarily so. The first criticism had to be visceral. The criticism of the fundamentals is a development.

(To be continued)

Experimental Cinema is published monthly by the Cinema Crafters of America at 1629 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Penna., U. S. A.

All manuscripts and subscriptions should be mailed to the above address.

Price \$2.00 a year: — 20c per copy.

Film Direction and Film Manuscript

By WSEVOLOD L. PUDOWKIN

Translation by Christel Gang made from the German of Georg and Nadja Friedland, Edition Verlag der Licht Bild Buhne. Copyright 1930 by Seymour Stern.

INTRODUCTION

THE foundation of film-art is *montage*. With this password advanced the young cinematography of Soviet Russia. And to this day, it has lost nothing of its (original) significance and effect.

It must be stated, that the concept "Montage" is not always correctly comprehended or judiciously interpreted. Among many people, the naive conception prevails that by montage is to be understood a simple pasting-together of the film-strips in their temporal sequence. Others again recognize only two kinds of montage: a quick and a slow. But they forget — or they do not know in the first place — that the moment of rhythm that is the law, which determines the variation of short and long film-pieces, is far from exhausting all possibilities of montage.

Allow me, by the way of elucidation, to draw upon another art-form, literature, in order to bring the significance of montage and its future possibilities more clearly into focus. For the poet or the writer, the single word represents the raw-material. It can have the most varied meanings, which first become defined through the word's position in the sentence. If, however, the word is dependent upon the potentialities of the composition, its strength and effect will be variable until it is a part of the fully realized art-form.

For the film-director, each scene of the finished film signifies the same as the word for the poet. Hesitating, selecting, discarding, cross-checking, he stands before the film-pictures and only through the conscious, artistic composition are the "montage-sentences" created, out of which, step by step, emerges the definite art-work, the film.

The expression, that a film is "turned"*, is entirely false and must be banished from film-language. A film is not "turned" — it is *built* out of the individual little picture-scenes, which represent the raw-material of the film. When a writer uses a word, for example, *birch*, it registers, so to speak, the protocol of a definite object, but it is void of soulful substance. Only in relationship with other words, only within the frame of a more complicated form, does it receive life and reality in art. I open a book, that lies before me, and read: "The tender green of the birch-tree" — certainly no first-rate composition, but it reveals distinctly and exhaustively the difference between the single word and a word-structure, in which the word "birch" has no longer a protocol-designation, but has assumed literary form. The dead word has been stimulated into life through art.

I maintain that every object which has been photographed from a definite viewpoint and is shown upon the screen to the spectator, is a *dead object*, even if it has moved before the camera. The independent movement of an object before the camera is still no movement on the screen; it is no more than the raw-material for the future montage-structure of the movement, which represents a composition of a number of different film-pictures. *Only when the object is composed out of a multiplicity of individual pictures when it emerges as the synthesis of different individual picture forms, does it possess filmic life.* Exactly as the word *birch*, it transforms itself through this process from a kind of protocol (recording), photographic copy of nature, into *filmic form*.

Every object must be so brought upon the screen through montage, that it receives not photographic, but cinematographic, reality.

We see that the significance of montage and its sphere of work for the director is far from being exhausted by a succession of contents or by the presentation of a time-rhythm. Montage is that primary, creative moment through which, out of a soulless photography, (the individual film-pictures) the living, cinematographic form is created. It is characteristic that in the presentation of a filmic form very different types of material may be used, which, in reality, have reference to entirely different appearances. Allow me to cite, as illustration, an example from my last film, *The End of St. Petersburg*.

At the beginning of the reel, which is devoted to the war, I wished to show a tremendous dynamite-explosion. In order to endow this explosion with the completest authenticity (of effect), I had a great mass of dynamite buried in the earth, and photographed the blast. The explosion was truly extraordinary — only not in the film. On the screen it was a tedious, lifeless affair.

Later, after long searching and testing, I mounted the explosion according to the effect I desired, without, however, using one single piece of the material first photographed. I photographed a flammen-werter, which threw out a thick column of smoke. In order to give the effect of the concussion, I mounted short shots of a magnesium-flame, in rhythmical change of light and dark. In between, I placed a "stock" shot of a river, which seemed to me suitable here because of its particular light-effects. Thus, finally, there came into manifestation the effect I had desired. The bomb-explosion was now *on the screen*: what it corresponded to in actuality might have been any-

thing at all, except a real explosion.

With this example I will say that montage is *the creator of filmic reality*, and that nature represents only the raw material for its work. That is decisive for the relationship of film and actuality.

This thought leads inevitably to consideration of the actor. The individual who is photographed is only the raw material for the future composition of his form in the film, effected through montage. When in my film, "*The End of St. Petersburg*", the task confronted me to depict an industrial magnate, I sought to solve the problem by mounting (*associating*) his figure with the rider-statue of Peter the First. I maintain, that the form so composed with an entirely different reality, takes the place of the mimic of the player, which usually smacks of the theatre.

In my earlier film *Mother*, I wanted to affect the spectator not through the psychological representation of the player, but through the medium of the depiction through montage. The son is sitting in his prison-cell. Suddenly a scrap of paper is slipped into his hand, (containing information) that he is to be set free the next day. It was now a question of how to portray his joy *filmically*. Merely to photograph the joyously excited face would be ineffectual. So I showed the play of the hands and a huge close-up of the lower half of the face, of the laughing mouth. These shots I mounted together with entirely different material. For instance, with shots of a turbulently flowing spring stream, with the play of sunbeams, which blended with the water, of birds, that played in village ponds, and finally with a laughing child. Thus, the expression of the "joy of the prisoner" seemed to me to have been formed. I do not know how the spectators have taken to my experiment: I myself am profoundly convinced of its effect.

Cinematography strides forward at a rapid tempo. Its possibilities are inexhaustible. We must not forget, that it is only now coming into its own as a true art, since it has only now been freed from the dictatorship of alien art-forms, for example, the theatre. Now it stands on the feet of its own methods.

The will, to suggest thoughts and emotions from the screen to the public through montage, is of emphatic significance, as it dispenses with theatrical (*sentimental, maudlin*) titles. I am firmly convinced that this is the path along which this great international art of the film will continue to progress.

Berlin, June, 1928

W. Pudowkin

FORWARD

The manuscripts that are submitted to production-companies have usually a very heterogeneous character. Almost all of them represent the primitive rendition of some fictional content, with which the authors have obviously troubled themselves only in order to relate some action, and utilizing for the most part, literary methods and not stopping to consider whether the material submitted by them will be interesting in cinematographic treatment. This question, however, is

very important. Every art possesses its own type of material-formation. That naturally applies also to the film. To work on a manuscript without knowing the working-methods of the director, without knowing the methods of shooting and cutting the film, is just as senseless as to give a Frenchman a German verse in literal translation. In order to convey the correct impression to the Frenchman, one must re-form the verse with due recognition of the peculiarities of the French poetic metre. In order to create a manuscript suitable for filming, one must know the methods through which the spectator can be influenced from the screen.

Sometimes, however, the view is advocated that the author has only to give the general, primitive outline of the action. The entire filmic adaptation (*according to this view*) is the concern of the director. But this view is entirely false. One must always bear in mind, that in no art can the creative process (formation) be divided into isolated stages, independent of one another. If one reflects on the theme, the final form of the film will certainly appear only in unclear outlines. But the manuscript-writer must have an image-conception (*Vorstellung*) of this form; he must create material sufficiently suitable to provide the director with the possibility of creating a production of filmically powerful effect. Usually, the result is entirely otherwise. There generally emerge out of the first scenario-attempts of the author a great deal of uninteresting, verbal, insurmountable hindrances that present obstacles in the path of filmic adaptation.

It is the task of this study to offer an elementary knowledge of the fundamental methods of work on the manuscript. A manuscript can be built as drama, and then it will be subjected to the laws which regulated the construction of a drama. In other cases, it can approximate the novel, and accordingly it will be defined by other construction-principles. But in the present work these questions can be only hastily touched upon, and readers who are particularly interested in them, must have recourse to special works.

PART I

THE MANUSCRIPT

What Is Meant by the Continuity?

It is generally known, that the finished film consists of a whole series of more or less short scenes, which succeed one another in a definite sequence-series. In the development of the action the spectator is transported to one or the other place, or, even more than that: he is shown a scene, a situation or a player not as totality-appearance,—but the camera selects single parts of the scene or of the human body. This style of the building-up of a picture, which divides the material into elements and then builds out of them a filmic whole, is called the *cutting of the film* or the "*Montage*". More will be said about that in the second part of this work. For the present, it is only necessary to allude in passing to this essential form of film-work. In filming the manuscript, the director is not in position to take the shots according to sequence, that is, to begin with the first scenes and to follow the shots through to the end in logical order. The

reason is very simple. If a decoration (set) is built, it almost always develops that the scenes playing within this decorative frame are scattered throughout the manuscript. If the idea should occur to the director to proceed after the shot of this scene to the following scene in the manuscript, which takes place in an entirely different location, it would be necessary from the start to build an extra-ordinary series of settings, which would consume an inconceivable amount of space and an equally inconceivable amount of material. Finally, a whole mass of sets would stand there, but it would not be possible to have one or the other pulled down.

To work in that fashion is naturally impossible. Neither the director nor the player, therefore, has the possibility to work in continuity-form. Through the loss of this possibility, at the same time, the unity, the style of the work and, with that, its effect, are imperilled. In order, therefore, to assure this structural (*spiritual*) unity, a method must be found, which, despite the fragmentization of the individual shots, will warrant a unified form of the whole. Above all, it is necessary to work out the manuscript in advance in the minutest detail, and the director will only then achieve positive results if he forms each single detail filmically, the final goal always before his eyes. In this preparatory work the style must be created, which conditions the value of the art-work. All individual, separate placements of the (camera)—apparatus—far, near, close up, above-angle, etc.—all technical properties, which connect a shot with the preceding and the succeeding shots, everything that constitutes the inner contents of a scene, must be precisely established, otherwise in the filming of a scene picked out of the middle of the manuscript, irremediable mistakes will occur. Thus, the continuity, that is, the finished shooting-form of the manuscript, represents a new and final-definitive establishment of every single detail, with provisions for all technical methods that are requisite for the shooting of the scenes.*

To require of the authors, that they write their work in such form, (virtually) means to make directors out of them. But this work must be accomplished even if the authors do not furnish a finished shooting-*"Stahlmanuscript"**, in which case they must provide the director with a series of essential stimulative items. The more technically detailed the continuity is worked out, the more possibilities will be at hand to realize on the screen the visual appearances which the author has presented.

The second chapter of Part I of Pudowkin's book will appear in the next number of EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA, and further translation of the entire book will appear serially thereafter.

*I. e., "cranked" or revolved.

*This sentence defines what is meant by a *"Stahlmanuscript"* (steel-manuscript). — C. G.

Analytical Treatise on the Dreyer Film, "The Passion of Joan of Arc" with Appendix of a Constructive Critique.

(Translated from the German Original by Christel Gang of Universal Pictures Studio).

by **WERNER KLINGLER**

MORE correctly stated, the film should be inasmuch as the montage-form and the called "The Trial Day of Joan of Arc", technique, which director Dreyer employs here, grow out of the embodied material and subject: the conflict between the clergy and the primitive, but faith-exalted, individuality, Joan.

Apart from its political significance, the collective belief-form of the church is shaken, by this simple ecstatic girl, to its foundations.

As with Bernard Shaw, it became an absolute necessity that Joan should suffer death. To express it in terms of Dostoevsky (Grand Inquisitor*), the returning savior would be once more nailed to the cross.

Viewing it in such a light, Dreyer selected the rhythmical, raw structure. He had to develop the film in such a way that Joan represented the combatible almost static center-point of the image-whole, and the judging council around her had to stand out in sharp, active contrast. Slowly, but surely, the circle narrows closer and closer upon her, straining towards a verdict.

Therefore, the seeming monotony of the film-rhythm up to the torture-scene has been consciously planned, for the exhaustive legal quibbling, the length and the monotonous form of conducting such a trial can in itself forcibly lead to the desired testimony. This torturous procedure on trial is not only medieval, but is still in our modern era applied successfully by the police.

A great deal of comment was made against the close-up treatment of this film, without anyone's really offering a convincing argument.

This close-up technique evolved, and it was postulated for this film, as already mentioned, out of the material that had to be embodied, and it is this particular film's own style inasmuch as the theme is not conveyed by abstract pantomimic action, but rather by a more spiritual one.

PRINCIPLE:

The impression produced through such a type of picture-and-montage form depends upon the association of expression from close-up to close-up, plus dynamic rhythm.

To determine more clearly the necessity of the close-ups here, I should like to state that the psychological characters in their strong divergence had to be absolutely kept apart from one another, as every psychological type in this film represents a world in itself. Understood in a purely optical way, these types had also to be separate and dis-

*In *The Brothers Karamazoff*.

tinct (particularly Joan) and a reciprocal mental, as well as physical, contact takes place across the frame of each scene and across the intercut of the scenes of the picture.

A typical example of this conflict-contact of types is the scoffing-scene: An English soldier tickles Joan with a long straw. If Dreyer had taken the two, that is, the soldier and Joan, and placed them into the same frame, Joan would have lost (suffered) (for the spectator) in formal significance. The director therefore keeps the two strictly separate, and goes so far that he does not even show us the soldier's hand, but only the moving long straw as it tickles Joan's face.

By this cut, all physical elements (of the soldier) have been eliminated from the shot of Joan, and only the base conduct on the one side, and the emotional reaction of Joan, on the other side, dominate the scene. That is, — absolute concentration on the head of Joan. Then, when Dreyer cuts back to the soldier, the latter strikes us as doubly raw in his coarseness.

Elucidation of the picture-composition: MED. CLOSE SHOT: The soldier's body is turned towards the camera. His head and glance are turned towards the right frame. His extended arm and hand with the long straw begin moving towards the lower right corner of the frame. Fully aware of his power, the soldier grins sadistically.

In contrast: CLOSE UP of JOAN. Moving from out of the lower left corner, the long straw appears upon her face, without the soldier's hand.

Through this compositional structure, Joan is reflected in the glory of martyrdom, similar to that of Christ in the Scoffing-scene.

Dreyer no doubt was fully aware of this and deliberately chose the Christ-motif, but, as the symbolical parallelism did not lie so close at hand, it had to be first creatively "discovered" as "plastic material."

Once more to emphasize the necessity of the close-up in this film, I should like to mention that the close-up is used to express emotion. The most sensitive mimical values are given their full worth. Thoughts, even the most hidden psychological functions, which speech and a theatrical performance have never been, and never will be, able to convey, become revealed to the audience.

If I wished to classify Dreyer's special film-style, I would use the formula:

PSYCHOLOGY TRANSFORMED
RHYTHMICALLY INTO PICTURES.

It is self-evident, that this particular psychological note in a film presupposes, first, exceptionally trained acting material, and secondly, an intellectual, spectator, as only in such a spectator, who possesses a wealth of association-conceptions, can this filmic quality and potency evoke its fullest response.

Certain it is, that such a film is not for the masses, because for the unschooled, primitive spectator the significance lies in action, in rhythmic and atmospheric presentation. Thus, the torture-

scenes and the burning at the stake in *Joan* will make the fastest and strongest impression. The inspired, superb performance of Mlle. Falconetti is universally acknowledged.

Before the first significant rhythmical highspot, the torture scene, the curve of action leaps several times abruptly, upward and downward. The change in the curve of action occurs in those moments in which Joan becomes increasingly helpless in the face of the questions directed at her by her judges, who press proportionately closer.

In such scenes Dreyer diminishes the camera-distance from his object, while through quickened action and a lightning-like change of pictures, the broad rhythmic structure becomes interrupted.

Beast-like, the heads of the priests from out of the depth of the picture, drive into the foreground.

A brilliant example of this montage-treatment is the following scene:

CLOSE UP: The head of Joan, front view.
To her right — —
The head of a priest in profile.
The priest scolds at Joan.

SINGLE

FLASHES; Head of Joan—Head of priest
" " closer
" — lower face, priest
" " closer
" — Mouth of priest, very large.

Upon her cheek the spit of the priest. Joan in such scenes actually steps out of her static reserve and moves with purely pantomimic gesture and emotion within the frame of the picture.

As already mentioned, with the scene of torture starts an important acceleration in the rhythmical structure.

Without appealing to the lower instincts of the spectator, this scene carries an immense, impressive power. "The spectator receives, so to speak, "an aesthetic emotional shock." He is swept away by the rhythmic action and he experiences the swooning of Joan.

Just as the complete scenic architecture has been maintained throughout in white, so also has the torture chamber been kept in white. Any kind of medieval, mystically shrouded atmosphere has been carefully avoided.

Through a compelling door, Joan steps into this glaring white, cruel reality.

For the psychology of the inquisitors Dreyer finds the most eloquent plastic material. To be sure and not to miss anything of the approaching spectacle, a priest, amidst the repressed excitement, gets a chair from the farthest corner of the room. Holding it high, he swings it across the heads of the others and places it in the front row.

The age of torture becomes completely revealed in its blunderings and its perversity, and stands clearly condemned.

(The camera follows the chair as it is being carried through the room).

A flash-shot displays the torture chamber in its totality. Fantastic machines and large wheels (black against the white background) create a foreboding of something dreadful. As quickly as

this static scene is withdrawn from the eye, nevertheless as forcefully the impression is held. The future proceeding in all its horror is foretold. Immovable in the foreground stands the attendant of the torture instruments. Significant in his insignificant corporality.

In close range, one beholds how a certain fluid is poured through a funnel. An array of funnels is shown graduating in size. Next, an array of saws, in the same order. The arrangement in its gradation indicates the degrees of torture (montage-type of association).

At the sight of these instruments Joan impresses upon her judges that "even if she should confess under torture, she would later recall everything."

And now the attendant turns one of the big wheels of a kind of revolving machine.

From a new angle one sees the broad side of the large wheel, spiked with hundreds of nails, turning from the upper side of the picture towards the lower.

By way of a masterful montage-construction Dreyer pulls the emotional-condition of the spectator into a mad whirl. He cuts continuously back and forth, from the revolving wheel to Joan; in each montage-picture the large wheel turns faster and faster, simultaneously drawing closer and closer into the frame, until finally, covering the whole screen, it reaches the point of culmination when Joan faints away.

And here the filmic rhythm falls back into a broader line.

In the bleeding scene that follows I would like to point out an important moment.

With one hand the surgeon stretches the skin of Joan's arm. The other, holding a knife, he raises to cut.

The blade-point of the knife is set tight against the skin, so that the spectator expects to see a cut and the blood oozing, — but — the hand holding the knife stops short, — in order to make immediately another attempt.

At this instant, Dreyer cuts into a new scene, i. e., to a priest, followed by the camera which moves from right to left as he passes along a hallway.

It is seldom that Dreyer chooses from a traditionally-optical horizontal angle.

The possibilities of a photographic apparatus were applied by him to their fullest creative extent. Our eyes which are governed by certain laws of association, are being educated here to an entirely new sight, and actually the vision gains significance, plasticity and depth.

One is astonished at the variety and power of these new, optically created forms.

For example, the first exterior shot is taken slantwise, downward at a stone-paved surface. In the foreground only legs, walking, are seen. In the background, in perspective shortening, the people become visible, into full view.

The atmospheric weight of this scene lies in the legs on the ground, on their way to the cemetery.

The polaric dramatic tension of the scene at the cemetery is held by the executive priest and Joan.

Slantwise, looking upwards, the priest is caught standing behind a high desk in such a way, that

the edges of his desk where they run together form a triangle, facing the camera.

Figuratively speaking, Dreyer also, carries the action to extremes.

Quickly, facing the camera, the priest directs his questions at Joan and places her at the choice between life and death.

He points to a grave that is being dug. She glances over, and beholds a row of flowers, as they are blown by the wind. (Moving shot to the flowers in opposition to the static shot of the grave).

With this comparative reflection (contrast-montage) Joan decides to save her life by abdication, and becoming for the first time, unfaithful to herself, she signs the document.

The crowd, having gathered around this scene, rushes back to the county-fair.

Taken back to her cell, Joan has to submit to the cutting of her hair.

Parallel with this action one sees again the county fair, the masses in their yearning curiosity for change, for a spectacle. Already they have forgotten Joan.

And now, in the cell upon the floor, Joan's hair is being swept up by a servant, with the hair also her selfwoven crown of cord.

Her kingdom being swept away thus, before her eyes, suddenly she realizes what she has done, and she screams for revocation.

Resultant verdict: Death at the Stake.

From now on, the rhythmic structure of its line of motion mounts in steep ascendancy towards the highpoint, towards the solution, towards the end.

All of a sudden Dreyer's camera becomes extraordinarily mobile. The following scenic construction is drawn into the rhythm of the flames.

After the preparation for the burning has been completed, (such as carrying of stones, wood, raising of pole, nailing of the parchment with the accusation to the pole), and after the crowd has deserted the county-fair and comes rushing once more towards the stake, *Dreyer divides*, with Joan's walk to the square of execution, to the wood pile and stake, the scenic structure into different actions and movements, each of which falls into a shorter and quicker tempo the faster the burning process advances.

The 5 elements of motion, above mentioned, are mounted within each other.

- (1) Doves
- (2) Fire
- (3) Priest
- (4) Crowd
- (5) Joan as the centre.

(1) — In the plastic material of the DOVES, Dreyer finds for Joan a continuous psychological process, a most expressive and moving symbol.

As Joan walks to the place of execution, a ...frightened flock of doves soars upward.

Thereupon, after some other scenes mounted in between, the doves light on the highest cross of the church tower.

Further scenes of the process of burning are mounted in between.

In formation a flock of doves flies up into the sky.

Further scenes of the burning-process in between.

The formation of doves flies higher.

Further scenes of the burning-process in between.

The doves fly still higher.

Further scenes of the burning-process in between.

The doves are high, at a vast expanse from the earth; they are visible merely as little specks.

The "pure soul" is carried by the doves (deliverance) into infinity. Simultaneously they represent for Joan a medium of overcoming the agony. From the cross and the doves she receives the capacity of overcoming.

(2) — The *FIRE*, the process of burning, represents the rhythmical counterpoint.

The higher the doves soar, the faster the flames devour, and the whole procedure is enveloped in an earthiness.

Later on, when Joan has disappeared from the stake, when the parchment, as if in anguish, has burned, its ashes blown to the winds, and when only the bare pole with the nail remains in sight, then all human arrogance of judgment stands stripped to its basest nakedness.

The camera shows the burning stake from all angles. In constant repetitive back-and-forth movements it catches the flames.

(3) — and

(4) — *PRIESTS* and *CROWD* plus *FIRE* (2) form together a rhythmic collective.

Again and again the priest is shown. The tall cross held by him towards Joan, becomes like Joan, smoke-enveloped, and is smoked out.

With frantic entreaty he screams his prayers to drive out the devil that is not there.

The action here starts its development *moving into a regulated function of antithesis*, (Heraclitus), as the crowd is itself, with the beginning of the insurrection, goaded by the devil.

The brutal mass, the people, are caught here specifically, in that Dreyer continuously cuts in with varied types in their reaction to Joan.

Camera movements to right, to left, upwards and downwards.

(5) — To all this, *JOAN* remains the center. Everything reacts towards her. Optically to her head.

Stirring, how she lifts her own shackles! The camera follows the movement exactly as she ascends the stake.

Joan then becomes the personification of the "*God forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

Up to the start of the fire, she feels the sedative of a drink, which a peasant woman had extended to her on her way to the stake.

Her trembling nostrils betray the first sign that the stake is burning. Then the fire itself becomes evident.

Her last words are:

"*OUR FATHER*"

(The length of this title is held at such a short tempo that it appears as if these words had escaped her mouth with her last breath).

With her last words, a spark of intuitive realiza-

tion strikes the mass of people. One of them turns around and screams:

"*YOU HAVE KILLED A SAINT!*"

And with that, the devil whom they wanted to drive out from *her*, turns into *them*, and destruction revolt, chaos follow. The eternal struggle over belief, over the Deity.

Dreyer shows the course of the struggle in an optical distortion. The eye is forced to follow the discordant change of black and white. The thought-response of the spectator becomes difficult. The scenic confusion also bewilders the spectator.

Demonstrated graphically, the sequence at the stake represents upon the screen 5 major points of motion.

The pole with Joan as middle-point (5) creates a *vertical*, which moves from the screen-center, Joan's head, *partly upward*, into the *irrational*, the doves (1), and *partly downward*, towards the burning pile (2).

The mad-house, the world, the county-fair (4) and the church (3) *move in* the rhythm of the blazing flame (2) rotating faster and faster *around the pole where Joan is bound*.

This film is no doubt the most completely attainable form of the "silent era."

A masterpiece, such as *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, has a right to be called a classic, for it possesses lasting merit.

As the "film" represents in itself a collective art-form, and depends entirely upon technique, the "talkies" today present the antithesis.

With relentless logical necessity, however, we are stepping out of the present-day forms and dilemma of styles into the purest and most complete film-form, the filmic synthesis.

With the harmony of light (picture) and tone-value (music) we come to the

SYMPHONIC SOUND-FILM

APPENDIX

Constructive critical comment on the collective montage of *Joan of Arc*.

In the first part of the film, in order to break down somewhat, the justified monotony, the distances of *close-ups* from Joan to the priests should have been from the very beginning increasingly widened.

Then, with the idea of advancing towards a circularly *diminishing* enclosure, the possibility lies open to lessen by degrees the distances, i. e., in gradually drawing the priests closer and closer to the camera.

Simultaneously with the advance of the circle, straining to close in on Joan, more and more the priests should have been shown collectively, in order to emphasize in contrast their basically psychological difference.

The screen-surface thus, first, through the constant closing-in of the camera upon the single heads, would become gradually filled, and secondly, at the same time, by the increasing number of heads at the final encircling of Joan, the surface would become completely covered, so that no open space would be left.

This type of montage would permit a greater play of tension, and upon this path of the purely "optical" (not rhythmical) the monotony of the rhythm would become released.

Constructive critical comment on the Individual Montage.

MEDIUM SHOT: Pantomimically a priest, with his lifted forefinger, gives significance to the words:

TITLE: "We, the church, gather the sheep that have lost their way."

CLOSE-UP of the hand with the pointed index-finger should have been cut in at this point, to symbolize the collective church-idea.

THE MODERN SPIRIT IN FILMS

Motion: The Medium of the Movie

By BARNET G. BRAVER-MANN

THE limitations of an art give to it individual character. In the limitations of the medium, the artist finds a means of stimulating rather than of restricting his expression. With every medium for art expression the mechanics through which form is realized are inherent in the nature of the medium itself. The dramatist thinks in terms of speech, the sculptor in terms of clay and marble; the composer and musician in terms of sound; the writer in terms of words; the maker of motion pictures in terms of motion and light. To express an idea belonging to a particular medium through the mechanics of another medium results in the negation of both forms. To apply, let us say, sound, speech, color and text or words to the medium of filmic motion subjects the mechanics of these various media to an arbitrary, false technic which emphasizes its limitations as weaknesses rather than as potentialities. A relation between the thought to be conveyed and the means used to express it does not exist. The result is a hybrid form.

For the most part producers in American studios have been content to adapt the mechanics of other arts to the films rather than to develop to the utmost the possibilities of filmic motion as a medium. Thus, they have borrowed from the stage, from literature, from music, from painting. By borrowing from other art forms the picture makers have hindered the logical development of the movie, insofar as they have consciously or unconsciously repressed the creative impulse in the industry towards the development of the motion picture as an art. When the medium is impeccably handled, whether in painting, music, the theatre or the cinema, there is no separation between the idea expressed and the medium through which it is expressed. In view of the misunderstanding that has been caused by novelties such as the talking and sound films, it behooves all of us who are in any way identified with or interested in the motion picture to ask ourselves critically, "*What is filmic motion as a medium?*"

Ever since the producers deserted the early manifestations of motion in slapstick and old-fashioned melodramatic action in the movie for the dubious practice of adapting the mechanics of other media to that of the motion picture, the American silent film has remained, artistically speaking, in a rut. To be sure, the picture makers naively hoped to improve the films by reason of these literary, theatrical and statically pictorial embellishments, but they succeeded merely in increasing the difficulties of production. Unhappily, they failed to recognize the most significant element in the films: *The mounting of filmic motion*—without which there could be no motion pictures . . . no images, patterns, masses or lines in motion.

Since motion breaks down the static scene, the static visual composition, it has no connection with the laws of design and movement as applied to painting and pictorial composition. However much painting may suggest movement of pattern and line, mass and volume, it is static whereas the movie gives continuous mobility to these elements.

Since filmic motion conveys thoughts by means of a succession of flowing images, it has no connection with the medium of words.

* * *

Since the images in motion are silent, then motion as a medium has no connection with nor relation to music and the mechanical devices for the reproduction of sound. Objects and images in motion can graphically suggest sound in the mind of the spectator as has been proved by every motion picture true to the medium, from Mack Sennett's slapstick comedies to the more sophisticated films like *Potemkin*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *The Crowd* and *The Last Laugh*.

The medium of motion has nothing in common with the medium of speech nor with the conventional movements of the stage in the expression of human emotion.

Since motion is the only medium which tells a story or conveys thought and feeling by means of flowing images, the conjunction of pieces in a film strip, the organization of sequences, and the variation of their tempo, it is *self-sufficient* like any independent art form.

A decade and a half ago the motion picture seemed to be on the right track. At that time the movie dealt in motion — in the medium true to itself. It gave small heed to the stage, particularly to a stage out of tempo with its age; it gave no heed to literature, nor to any of the other independent art media.

* * *

Producers with aspirations, box-office and otherwise, sought to improve the screen by imitating the narrative manner of the stage play. This imitation of theatre transferred the slow tempo of the stage to the movie and interrupted the logical flow of images inherent in the nature of the medium of motion. On the screen, space is complementary to motion. Space implies depth and is necessary for the movement of objects and bodies in any given direction, thereby imparting to the motion picture a scope of visual appeal that cannot be achieved by the necessarily slower tempo and restricted movement of the stage or of the talking film. The slow tempo of dialogue films and of the stage production is due to the slow movement of objects, to static patterns, and to limited command of depth, pace and space for the extension of movement. Whenever a film, as frequent-

ly happens in the case of the dialogue films, slows down to a degree which makes it possible for the eye deliberately to take in an object or image on the screen, and when the mind is conscious of the passage of time in the act of optical scrutiny, then the film is too nearly static to be a motion picture. Motion does not permit the eye to focus on an image for a long period of time. That is what precisely happens on the stage or in the talking film. This absence of motion limits the degree of emotional and visual appeal, for it is the never ending patterns in motion moving through space on different planes, and, building up to, a totality concept that heighten the dynamics of the silent screen.

* * *

Farsighted, prophetic directors and technicians of the theatre, like Adolphe Appia, Oskar Strnad and Adolph Linnebach, have tried to adjust the mechanics of the theatre to the tempo of our times by seeking to solve the limitations of space on the conventional stage (which producers of dialogue films have brought to the screen) only to realize that no theatre stage can ever be spacious enough for the depth and variety of motion necessitated by the motion picture. Several years ago, Linnebach at the Prinz Regenten Theatre in Munich predicted that the technique of stage production would have to adapt a quicker tempo by a rapid shifting of scenes similar to, but not like, that of the movie. Thus, while the best technicians in the modern European theatre seek to overcome the spatial limitations of the stage, American producers of dialogue films have brought to the screen the limitations of the conventional speaking stage.

When Griffith achieved his phenomenal success with *The Birth of a Nation*, producers seemed as blind then to the reason for the success of this film as they are to-day to the dynamics of the movie. If they had been sensitive of the drama of motion as it is revealed in this Griffith epic, and which method of mounting Griffith himself has abandoned, they would have seen that it was the way in which the director had organized the sequences of patterns, the short scenes and quick cuts and particularly the fragments of objects and images in motion, which imparted such dynamic power to *The Birth of a Nation*. Producers did not observe that the motion of the patterns and images, their building up to an idea or concept, rather than Mae Marsh and the Gishes, served to develop the emotional appeal — that the same motion, if enacted by other players, would have been just as effective. People who were spectators of *The Birth of a Nation*, remember the motion, but have forgotten the players. However, for purely box-office reasons Mae Marsh, the Gishes and other players were made stars by the producers. The fact is, that if Griffith had mounted *The Birth of a Nation* in the later narrative manner of most conventional films, neither that picture nor the players in it would have created a lasting impression.

* * *

The development of stars brought about the exploitation of personalities — and the exploita-

tion of personalities arrested the development of films true to their medium *Motion*. Scenarios and photoplays were adjusted to the star, with the result that requirements of the medium received secondary attention. The medium was debased to enhance the player, instead of the player being fitted to the medium and the creative demands of mounting. Thus has motion as a medium suffered neglect.

That Charles Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks have held their own in American pictures longer than other players is due chiefly to the fact that they have been truer to the nature of the medium and pursued their own course independent of producers who never understood motion as an art. Intellectually and artistically blind to the magic of motion, most producers and directors have utilized the close-up with abandon — the producer because the high salaries paid the stars warranted much exhibition of their faces; the director because it was an escape from the difficulties of thinking in terms of motion, and building up an idea through the composite effect of non-narrative images. With most stars as indifferent to the medium as the producers, of course they agreed to the non-cinematic use of the close-up, and as is known in the industry, many stars insisted that contracts specify a certain number of close-ups in each picture.

* * *

The more close-ups there were without dramatic reason the greater was the neglect of motion. For years, the film has been kept from functioning in accordance with its own inherent nature until audiences tired of the lazy, narrative technic and its sentimental absurdities. They began to find more drama in motion by driving cars, dancing, watching ball games, attending prize fights, football games, horse races, aeroplane meets, than in observing the picturization of stage scenes in front of stage sets and reading the explanatory titles that the movies have offered. When people discovered they could get the drama of motion elsewhere than in the movie house, the film merchant thought that the public had wearied of motion pictures. The truth is that comparatively few pictures have been made which were mounted in harmony with the medium of motion. The public never tired of *motion pictures* because there never has been an over-supply of such films. Rather they had grown weary of pictures not true to the medium and of photographed "kitsch" determined by the sanctified taboos of Will H. Hays.

Instead of realizing the situation, correcting it by adjusting production to the demands of the medium, or better yet, by developing directors from the ranks of artists who think naturally in terms of images and patterns, and by encouraging writers to plan scenarios in terms of motion and life, the producers continued to go from bad to worse and in their last extremity adopted the dialogue film.

* * *

To attribute the spiritless quality of many motion pictures to the mechanical characteristics of

the camera and the projector is an empty excuse for the inability to create significant, powerful patterns and images in the medium. Especially is this true when we note that the camera can be used to create and distort forms as well as to take them realistically, and that the projector can heighten moments of drama by increasing the tempo of the images as well as the dimensions of the screen. But these, although important factors, including three dimensional effects, reflecting surfaces, the elastic screen, flexible lens and other devices, are incidental to the one basic principle of the motion picture: *Motion*. To brand the mechanics of the motion picture as limitations in the way of its remaining a creative art is on a par with decrying the piano because its limitations are copper wire and ivory keys; or painting because its tools are oil, turpentine, color, canvas and brushes of pig bristle.

The application of thought and feeling to the mechanics of an art medium determines the quality and degree of artistry in the finished product — whether a sonata, a portrait, or a motion picture. Among the followers of every art there are hacks, inevitably; and in the cinema it is the hacks among directors and producers who are most vociferous about the mixture of speech, sound and color with motion. They are vociferous because they have shown themselves unable to cope with the magic of motion and have produced shadows of animated puppets instead of real motion pictures. Shall we confuse the limitations of the motion picture with the incapacity of directors and producers? It is as if a pianist blamed the wires and ivory keys of the instrument for his inability to play like a Paderewski.

* * *

Since the principles of each art medium are the same as regards structure, flow, rhythm and imagery, they function in such a way as to give purity to each medium. The more completely anything creative is done in its own medium, the less satisfactory it will be in any other medium. There is no order in an art form made to absorb the mechanics of other art forms. The motion picture is the only art medium which gives expression to emotion and ideas through images in motion, light and space, thereby reflecting the dynamics of our period. That these images ordinarily appear on a film as the result of having been recorded by a camera and transferred to the screen by means of a projector, is wholly secondary to *motion*. The makers of motion pictures will find they must return to these first principles:

- 1—The medium of cinematic art is *motion*.
- 2—Motion as an art medium is *self-sufficient* and has no affinity to such media as words (away with explanatory subtitles), music (sound), speech (spoken titles), or painting (color and static design).
- 3—Motion applied to a succession of images can transmit thought, stimulate emotion, indicate time, place, character, sound, speech, atmosphere, physical sensation and state of mind.

- 4—Motion, when utilized as an art medium by artists, has proved the motion picture a major art form, logically independent, inevitably self-sufficient and utterly free of intrusion by the mechanics of any other medium.

Chaplin has done it. Fairbanks at times has done it. Murnau, Pabst, Dupont and others have done it. And the Russians, Eisenstein, Dovshenko and Pudowkin, with the application of their principles of montage, are carrying the art of motion further than anybody to-day. The motion picture — the picture based on motion and the calculated mounting of images that command spectator attention — has never failed to be impressive, even when built upon themes of simple content. The medium of motion as rhythmically applied to patterns, images and themes, demands the control by artists. The necessity of the motion picture is obedience to the characteristics of its medium, — a medium which only artists in imagery can use with creative, stimulating effect for the enrichment of the screen and Man's imagination.

THE NEW CINEMA

A Preface to Film Form

The Cinema, a medium capable of aesthetic expression, sensitive and profound as any of the arts, is deliberately going to waste through the trickeries, fictions, criticism and conventions, in the jargon and definitions of the other art media. Very little that is original in the cinema's exclusive mode of truth or beauty has as yet been unreel'd: and by truth or beauty in the cinema sense, I mean immeasurably more than the composition (or tone) of a pictorialism, or the pulchritude of a marionette.

In America the cinema has become a parasitic medium conditioned for sex nomads and day-dreamers. Its plastics are projected upon the most melodramatic aspects of behavior; a fetish is made of the cinema's fact recording powers, and its celluloid marionettes are deified. Sociologically the American film is superficial; its environments are entombed in sentimental implications, and the conventions of its relations (psychological as well as cineplastic) are an imposition.

The men who direct these films have been recruited from their associations with the other arts; theatre, literature, painting. These novices to the film medium, instead of defining its hard differences and unique capabilities, instead of allowing the plasticities of its instruments to limit and govern their visions, project their celluloid results in concocted plastics (funded from their previous aesthetic pilferings) and moral recipes suited to the evanescent demand of the many. To their (directors) abusive treatment of the medium's properties for expression can be blamed the cinema's stunted aesthetic growth, its 'particular' lethargy.

It was not until the projection of the Soviet film "Potemkin" that the cinema became aware of its individuality. "Potemkin" was the first film to break away from the multitude of static reproductions of lighted scenes, of idiotic facial distortions, of declamatory emotions, and of unrelated and over-emphasized projections. Eisenstein, the film's director, replaced the usual nebulous movie manikins, with characters from real life; ludicrous sets, with direct setting; arty photographic effects, with a *cinematic flexibility of camera organization*. Eisenstein achieved his results not by any emphasis of actor or acting, plot or setting, but by an *arithmetical relationship* of the projection of images in *time, movement and image content*; each projection of *image in movement and time* paralleled and reverted and carried the component projections in a rhythmic, and psychological relation to one another, and at the same time unreel'd Eisenstein's 'theme' in cadences strictly cineplastic. As a result the spectators reactions arose from this *organized relation of the cinematic* (thence structural) elements in the film, *movement, image and time*, in preference to the usual relations such as acting, decor, dynamite plot, or pictorialism, but which would not have as valid an aesthetic cinema significance.

Omitting the few abstract films for the moment, "Potemkin" was the beginning of aesthetic form in the cinema insofar as it was the first instance of a film which expressed the essential idea (theme) in terms of cinema and came into existence only and entirely through the particular of its medium — the film.

The cinema's particular means, the language that distinguishes the cinema from other media of expression is inherent and intrinsic to the motion picture camera and projector. Its vocabulary is generally known (fades, dissolves, pams, tilts, lense changes, masks, iris, slow motion, cuts, etc. etc.). Each of these cinematic factors contain values for psychological and cineplastic progression in a film, and unite to project a whole which consists of and exists by them all. They are the structural units for film form, cineplastic form, and unless they are used for purposes other than a mere reproduction of people or things, nothing of aesthetic value will unreel. The arrangement and content of as well as in the cinematic units, is part of the cineplastic idea. In proportion as these cinematic units embody the essence of a thing or situation, and the director's knowledge of symmetry composition, synthesis, in the cineplastic sense of those terms; the film will be good. *Cineplastic form then is produced by the arrangements and co-ordination of the differentiation of the cinematic units, and not of the cinema contents*, such as acting, setting, or pictorialisms.

The arrangements or the relations of the content factors before "shot" is not necessarily a sign of cineplastic value. A director must be able to understand the mutual dependence of the successive content factors and to co-ordinate them with cinematic units into a unified whole. The first relationship is established by *MOVEMENT* (mo-

bile camera, pams, tilts, lense changes, cuts, dissolves, tempo, camera changes), *TIME* (speed, interval and duration of objects, cinematic units and movements). The second coherence is dependent upon *IMAGERY* (subject matter in its highest organization, cinematically, psychologically, compositionally). A cineplastic ensemble is established by the introduction of organization, rhythm, design. The laws of such cineplastic arrangements are identical with the laws which govern all psychological and physiological activities.

An analogy can be made with the painter who from his element of color, produces line, light, space, solidity, and other color. He makes a pattern of each of these factors and relates each to the other in a complete design; lines are related to other lines, light to other light, space to space, solids to solids, (all by the intermediary of color) and from the interrelations the painter achieves a quality known as form; plastic form. This plastic form is rated in proportion as the integration between subforms and content is complete, original, a personal unification to express universal values.

In a similar manner the film director proceeds, relating *Time to Time* (speed, interval and duration of objects, movements and cinematic units) *Movement to Movement* (mobile camera, pams, tilts, lense changes, cuts, dissolves, tempo, camera changes) and *Image to Image* (subject matter in its highest organization, cinematically, psychologically and compositionally); a certain number and kinds of cinematic units arranged and ordered at specific *Time* and projecting specific *Images* produce a cineplastic movement. A periodic variation or accent of a number of such cineplastic movements interrelated, produce a cineplastic rhythm; other rhythms different with regard to specific images or combinations of movements or time values, but related in general psychological order, further diversify and amplify the cineplastic structure. *Censorship note*: An alteration of any unit in such an ensemble would destroy the existing relations and ruin that particular psychological and cineplastic unity. It is this combination of all forms that constitutes value, aesthetically important in proportion as the synthesis is complete; and despite the so-called limitations of the 'mechanical medium' there does exist the greatest latitude for a director to integrate his content (subject matter, theme) into cineplastic forms (organization of *movement, time, imagery*) in which the only limitations are his experience and imagination.

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Principles of the New World-Cinema

By SEYMOUR STERN

"Man is moved by his images, and only values experienced as an image are cogent to move him."

— Waldo Frank.

Being a Continuation of the Aesthetic and Structural Principles of Soviet Cinematography, Including New Forms of Film-Montage.

I — — Form and Purpose

THE present is a period of emergence for the world-cinema. Everywhere, except chiefly in Hollywood and in England, the old structural forms are disappearing, and new ones, indigenous to film-art and no longer to literature and the other arts, are emerging. To use a somewhat different figure, the world cinema-ball, traveling through a new, self-created space-time, has experienced a sudden great burst of momentum imparted through the shock of Soviet impetus. The two Anglo-Saxon countries, true to the character of the present Anglo-Saxon decadence, that is boring like a deadly cancer through the Western world, have been cinematically unaffected by the film-technical revolution that started (pre-eminent-ly) with *Potemkin*. But except for these back-sliding nations, throughout the world the film may be noted as vastly (though of course not totally) freed from the lunacy of the Hollywood tradition.

In particular, the year now closing has been significant for the fresh and startling accomplishments of Bolshevik cinematography. The Soviet film-artists have in this year not only surpassed their previous efforts, but established, in every point of formal structure and every concept of film-methodology, complete emancipation from the tyranny of the former world-conquering Hollywood film-methods. In every sphere, thanks to Soviet attainments, we can at last record the disestablishment of that false, commercially inspired American technique which, for fifteen years, has dominated and retarded the entire conception and technique of film-construction throughout the world. Artistically and technically, thus far, Moscow has vanquished Hollywood. Not only in the domain of "realism" have the Soviet cinematographers demonstrated the American "school" to be composed of frauds and liars, but in every department of cinematic construction, - - - in direction, photography, cutting, thematic structure and all subsidiary departments. In fact, it is a vital feature of Soviet film-triumph that the "department" (that is, the departmentalization of creative activity) no longer exists: Although recognizing the film as a collective art-form, the Russians, by grace of that inborn artistic character which makes the Slav at once superior to the Anglo-Saxon, has solved the problem of the creative dominance of the film by one master, by one master's vision and organic genius. (This, it is almost unnecessary to add, holds every bit as true of collaborative direction as of direction by one man. A powerful religious social understanding welds into a single dominant mind, such as Pudowkin's, into the film-

structure). Bolshevik cinematography has in this year enormously freed the world-screen from the commercial enslavement of Hollywood. More than that. It has outdone the splendid achievements of its own first period.

Taking a perspective-view of the period of Soviet cinematography now closing, Eisenstein observes: "I believe that only now can we begin to hazard a guess concerning the ways by which will be formed a genuine Soviet cinematography, i. e. a cinematography which not only in respect of its class attributes will be opposed to bourgeois cinematography, but which will also be categorically *excellent in respect of its own methods**. *Ten Days That Shook the World*, although in certain ways, which I shall discuss, consummating this period of the Soviet screen, in certain other ways bears the germ — and even the first fruit! — of this self-transcendence. As perhaps the most dynamic application known to date of a highly advanced montage-form, it challenges the film-students of the world to burrow deep into the problems of the ideological film-culture that the Bolshevik cinematographers have developed. And in this connection, probably nothing represents a more explosive liberation from the fettering notions of the Hollywood producers than the *Arsenal* of the Ukrainian director, Dovjenko.

By way of introducing the more advanced problems of film-montage to American and English readers, I consider it necessary to present a few of the outstanding elementary principles of film-construction formulated by W. L. Pudowkin in his manual entitled *Film Regie Und Film Manuscript* — *Film Direction and Film Manuscript*. This manual, which was translated for me by Miss Christel Gang of Universal Studios, Universal City, California*, is indispensable to film students as the primer in the approach to cinematic technique and philosophy.

Montage, emphasizes Pudowkin, does not mean merely what its literal translation implies: "mounting". Neither does it mean simply "cutting". The notion that montage is merely "a pasting to-

*From an article by Eisenstein, *The New Language of Cinematography*, published in *Close Up*, May, 1929.

*The kindness and efforts of Christel Gang, exercised through her sensitive and meticulous translations of technical literature from German into English, have made it possible for film-students in Hollywood and along the West Coast to become acquainted with a great deal of material that would otherwise still be inaccessible to them. Her translation of Pudowkin's book was made privately, for purpose of immediate reference, but arrangements are now being completed to publish it for the American market. Wherever material translated from the German appears in this paper, the translation, unless otherwise indicated, is Miss Gang's.

gether of the film-strips in their temporal succession," writes Pudowkin, "is naive." Many times in this book Pudowkin offers definitive guiding notes on the particular powers, functions, and peculiarities of montage-construction. These laws and general principles, which constitute the basis of Russian film-ideology, form the very crux and essence of the correct construction of films; they also give us a vision of the present emergence of the screen into an art of colossal power.

Page 59—"Basically taken, montage is a forceful steering of the thoughts of the spectator. If the montage is a simple, unguided binding of the different pieces, it tells the spectator nothing."

12—"Montage is the creator of film-reality, and nature represents only the raw-material of the work that makes film-reality. This is the most decisive point in the relationship between film and actuality."
(Italics mine).

54—"The picture is built out of the totality of small pieces."
"THE BUILDING UP OF A SCENE OUT OF PIECES, OF AN EPISODE OUT OF SCENES, OF A SEQUENCE OUT OF EPISODES, OF THE PICTURE OUT OF SEQUENCES, IS CALLED MONTAGE."

55—"There is no breaking-down, or interruption, but only a systematic, lawful building up."
(This has reference to the close-up, which, Pudowkin states, when correctly employed as part of the montage-structure, is never felt as an interruption of the action, but, on the contrary, as a highly geared building-up of the action and the line of movement).

101—"The emotion can doubtless be conveyed through the specific rhythm of the montage."
(He cites Griffith as the only American director to have accomplished this to any appreciable extent).
"The necessity, which guides the changing glance of the eye, coincides exactly with those laws which regulate the correct building-up of the montage."
(This forms the *optical*, and therefore purely *descriptive*, basis of montage).

102—"MONTAGE is the HIGH POINT OF the CREATIVE WORK of the DIRECTOR."

115—"The director organizes every single scene; he analyzes it through reduction (solution-analysis) into its elements, and at the same time, he already visualizes the union of these elements in montage."

"Change of placement" montage is one of the cardinal points in the construction of the Russian film-dynamic. It is a two-fold means of camera utilization and optical attack. The conventional, well-known form is simply the shift of camera in plane, angle or general line of vision, taking the same action. It requires the photographing of two or more "shots". But there is another, more radical, form of placement-change montage, which the Russians have brought to a high degree of powerful effect. At the highest tension-points (study the film-strip of *Potemkin*, *Mother*, *Ten Days*, etc.), they "break" the individual image-element into a number of separate placements (but not into separate "shots"), which evidently, to judge from sections of the film-strip I have seen, is accomplished not by cutting (the "shot" is a constant: it is always the same "shot") but probably by a stop-watch camera. The important consideration for this type of construction (which is really an *analysis* of the single scene, within itself!) is that the "shot" is constantly itself, that is, the same "shot", and that it *runs continuously* on the strip *without a patch* (until, of course, the next scene begins). The effect is that of an analytical totality and very strong. I shall deal more thoroughly with the structural precepts of the film-dynamic in my remarks on analytical montage.

I rehearse these points only because I realize how impoverished is the film-ideology of radical American cinematography, and because I am concerned to provide in a short space an adequate introduction to the elementary precepts of montage-construction before proceeding to the principles of the new cinematography.

In an article, I expressed the view that "this book is to film-technique what Aristotle is to logic and Euclid to geometry — the first clear word and the first systematic document that is likely to be studied generations after its appearance." This opinion has been richly substantiated by the subsequent emergent development of Bolshevik cinematography from the elementary principles here defined into a domain of abstract* cinematography which will ultimately lead the film to the very door of mind and fourth-dimensional representation. "To say the truth," writes Pudowkin, "I fear my book has grown old. Incessant experimental cinematographic work, which progresses in U. S. S. R., has led us to new principles of montage, or, more correctly put, to a new development of old principles.**"

Perhaps this is true. But no beginning is complete without a perusal of at least the optical foundations of montage which his book presents.

*Not to be confused with the "abstract" cinematography of the French cinema, — that is, with technical laboratory exercises, however important from certain points of view, such as *Rien Que Les Heures*, *Ballet Mechanique*, *A Quoi Revent Les Jeunes Films*, etc. The abstract film, according to my ideology, belongs outside the working-sphere proper of mass-cinematography and can be of value only to limited groups of students who need cinematic "piano practice".

**From a letter to me.

The foundations of the new cinema that leads to mind carry us to the consideration of *radical* principles of *vision* (image-bases and fundamentals), *organization* and *construction*. The deepening connection between film-theory and film-practice not only justifies, but actually *necessitates*, such ideological structure and terminology as I have here built for the advancement of cinema throughout the world.

We may see from the foregoing interesting and significant observations that the making of a film, after the basic underlying theme** has been decided upon, is not a matter of romantic intuition, of helter-skelter shooting of haphazard putting-together, or of cutting according to impulse, but is rather a matter of working out the mathematics of filmic form based on the calculation of the neural and psychological perception-reactions of the audience to optical sequences which are *mounted in the order of an ever-heightening tension*. The whole is an entity evolved out of the montage of its parts; therefore the "vision of the whole" must be always in mind.

Definition:

MONTAGE, TAKEN IN ITS BROAD-EST PHILOSOPHICAL SENSE, IS THE CONCEPTUAL AND STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT-FORMS OF THE FILM TOGETHER WITH THE VISUAL CONSTRUCTION OF THESE FORMS, TOWARDS THE END OF A PERFECT REALIZATION OF DYNAMIC HARMONY AND THE CREATION OF A DOMINATING RHYTHM.

And with less stress on the structural, and more on the metaphysical side:

MONTAGE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE IMAGE-IDEA THROUGH THE FILM IN DYNAMIC AND VISUAL FORM.

To abide by so important a philosophical evaluation of the essence of cinematography, requires, as may be instantly realized, (1) a mind sensitively attuned to the *tone* of the *image-music* which, pictorially, expresses the image-reality of *cinema*, and (2) a methodology of *practical film-construction* that follows the path already so brilliantly blazed by the Bolshevik producers. Perhaps no one has more finely sensed or more succinctly expressed the immense implications of the above point of view, in its relation to the new methodology of film-construction, than my friend and confrere, H. A. Potamkin. In the first of a series of important essays on the *Phases of Cinema Unity**, he wrote as follows:

**By theme "I understand, and mean, the same thing that Pudowkin, Potamkin, Bakshy and others of this persuasion mean: i. e., not 'story' (especially as 'story' is understood and obeyed in the putrid, damaging, un-filmic tradition of Hollywood), but *intrinsic subject-matter* — fundamental, underlying, intellectual content — in a word, what I later in this essay name "the essential, radical, underlying image-idea."

*Close Up, May, 1929.

"The entire film must be preconceived in anticipation of each detail! A curve or an angle, a close up or a fade-out, must not be recognized as an isolated detail, but as an inevitable part of an inevitable pattern. The whole disciplines the detail, the detail disciplines the whole. There is a more demanding logic than the logic of the psychology of a character at any moment or the logic of the dramatic moment. There is the rhythmic structure of the unit determining the moment. No such thing as a "shot" exists in the aesthetic sense of the cinema, whatever one may call the immediate taking of a scene. Films are rhythms that commence and proceed, in which — ideally — every moment, every point, refers back to all that has preceded and forward to all that follows. A stress or a deformation, an image or an absence of image, has validity only if it is justified by the pattern up to point, and if it leads again to the pattern from that point."

Words freighted with the Mosaic thunder of law! Words rich in explicit injunctions of unity, universe-logic, universe-necessity, universe-majesty, that few will apprehend and fewer find possible of attainment . . . Out of such words will emerge the images that will conquer man . . .

This definition of montage, and the appended comments, may be accepted as the axiomatic beginning-point in the entire ideological system of cinematography. They may be taken as the synthetically defined basis upon which rest all super-structural aesthetic and metaphysical considerations in the art of filming.

The sphere of cinematographic work, so defined, may seem to circumscribe the field of practice to the exclusion of the so-called intuitive artist. This is precisely a state of affairs Eisenstein has willed and has striven to inaugurate. He has violently banished intuition from the creative realm and absolutely denied it a single claim to existence in cinematography. His well-known statement, "I am an engineer by training, strictly utilitarian," etc. . . . My slogan is, "Down with intuitive creation!" is expressive of the general tendency of Bolshevik cinematography. Pudowkin does not share this view. If they can achieve this long-sought goal, if they can rid creative cinematography of the handicap of intuitive "inspiration" and thus remove the film-structure from the constant danger of the creeping-in of intellectually foreign elements, they will have accomplished another great thing. I cannot enter further into this phase of the matter. It would take me too far into the vital matter of the relation of the unconscious mind to the objective image-reality of the film, a subject I shall treat separately. Let it suffice here to conclude that the creator of the film-reality, in order to fulfill these principles, must have a profound working-knowledge of the mathematics of film-form. By the mathematics of film-form, I mean, specifically, the analytical and synthetic treatment of the picture in its sequences and individual parts.

In Eisenstein we find a master of the mathema-

tics of film-form, and the first to master it by an intensively intellectual, non-intuitive method. While it has been said that Pudowkin is "traditionless", (in a sense that is outside the scope of my essay), it is really Eisenstein, who, in this direction at least is traditionless. Pudowkin, while he is far above the rank and wildly unconceptual intuitionism that furnishes the American, English and German producers their sole means of ('technique', leans towards Griffith in certain intuitional phases of image-construction*. But in Eisenstein, we find the completest and most radical departure from anything resembling these methods. The insistent, religious reliance of Eisenstein on the general principles of modern science and mathematics for every structural point, for every characterization, for every movement, — in a word, for everything in the nature of cinematic effect and montage-expression, is one of the wonders of the film-culture of U. S. S. R. This tendency may explain the accusation of a certain hardness and dis-individualized impersonality in his works, but according to my viewpoint all such charges are untrue, or, at best, superficial and therefore inaccurate. Eisenstein chooses to project the tragedy of the mass, rather than that of the individual, in whom, as a result of a religious belief in a strict Marxian materialism, he does not believe. But the emotional force is there as much as in Pudowkin. The irony is equally savage, the bitterness equally vitriolic, the hatred of the Western bourgeois world equally fierce, the will to expose the lying decadent peoples of the West, is equally developed and expressive. All the elements are there, and all of them are satisfying. The result of Eisenstein's ideology is the "explosive montage", of which *Ten Days That Shook the World* is the readiest and most significant example. *Potemkin*, which proceeded along an image-graph of more compactly woven texture, contains the rudiments of Eisenstein's montage in the October film. *Ten Days*, experimentally however unfulfilled in the abstract domain, is, by the least appraisal, a world-revelation in the montage of "movement-explosions" scientifically established.

My digression on the directorial beliefs and intentions that are making for the re-formation of the new world-cinema would be incomplete in this phase if I neglected to mention perhaps the most interesting particular of all, the method of the world-famed Bolshevik director, Alexander Room. Room has himself stated his general method and intention.

"I want my camera to be like Roentgen, whose rays pierce through to the innermost of our being. I want to project on the screen the very foundation of man in order that the analysis of determinate sensations, of acts and thoughts, are translated into luminous images. The academic professor Bescherew, who died recently, taught

me long ago the science of human reflexes. "I devoted several years to the study of determinism, of psychic states, of the theory of repression, of Freud in particular and of diverse manifestations of fear, anguish, sorrow and love. All that I learnt has actually been of great service to me in the preparation of my actors."

Could there be a clearer picture of the intent, seriousness and purposiveness of Soviet film-methods? With this I am content to conclude my remarks as to the factors of intuition and intellect in relation to the preparation of the montage.

Analysis of montage-construction leads to a division of the entire sphere. I establish it as a matter of categorical expediency to attack *all* problems of montage-construction on either of two paths of construction: Labor on the film is labor on either the MONTAGE OF VISUAL ELEMENTS or on the MONTAGE OF DYNAMIC ELEMENTS. Briefly, the basic working-categories of montage are *dynamic montage* and *visual montage*. There are no other divisions. There is no simpler way of handling the situation of film-construction.

Under the montage of visual elements may be grouped the following items of artistic labor:

- Photography
- Lighting
- Set construction
- (Scenic architecture)
- Composition
- Tonalization
- Printing (laboratory)
- Cleansing and preservation of the celluloid strip.

Under the montage of dynamic elements may be grouped the following items:

- Movement (tempo, rhythm, motion-analysis, etc.)
- Continuity (and cutting)
- Camera operation.

Under this may also be classified all other forms and functions of movement on the screen.

The total montage-organization of the film is the result of the harmonization of visual montage with dynamic montage. To "mount" a film means, in its entire sense, to mount visual film-elements in *unity (co-ordination) with dynamic film-elements*. A film may have a good (dynamic) montage. It may be, in continuity, cutting and in individual movement-forms, a fine piece of work. But the final montage-result will be spoiled or destroyed if the visual elements (the lighting, photography, printing, etc.) are not in harmony with the pattern of the whole. But this condition of "harmony" (or unity) is not attained according to the methods of the present Hollywood photographers who imagine they have only to flood every scene with light and have crystal-clear printing in order to make their films photographically (optically) "appealing". On the contrary, the scheme for the working-out of the visual montage must be carefully planned in joint consultation of director and photographer. The exact degree of tonalization, the general distribution of light and shade throughout the film, (each scene envisioned

*It is interesting to note that Pudowkin's films, which are emotionally more violent than Eisenstein's, are the more popular. They concentrate more on the individual, and hence are more sympathetic.

in relation to the *whole* vision), and the particular quality of this light and shade for the particular film at hand, are montage-matters of as vital concern to artistic cinematography as the problems of continuity and movement-montage. It is a montage of *cinematic chiaroscuro* that, in particular, is required.

The montage of a film, therefore, is *not only* a montage of movement (dynamics): *it is also, and equally, a montage of optical and visual effects (visuals)*. The Russian photographers have best understood these laws. To realize how much they have understood them, witness the astonishing work of such photographers as Tisse, Feldman, Golownia and Demutzki.

The chief domain, however, of a film-ideology concerned with the fulfillment of form, is movement. The present period of world-cinematography, which has yielded so much of significance in Soviet production, marks the complete and almost universal establishment and recognition of the nature of cinematography as *plastic form*, — as *movement*, (A recognition that comes almost too late). To us today the axiom of *movement* seems *a priori* understood. Such an attitude, however, is still actually without justification. We are in danger of forgetting that for fifteen years, most of the world has persistently failed (or refused) to think of cinema in its native terms and that this error of judgment (which, more than anything, caused the premature corruption of the production-mind and hence of the art), has been honored with perpetuation by the long-dreamed of triumph of the talking-film in the most conventional theatrical tradition. But among the world-minority who have best understood the film, the condition of movement and all its implications are acknowledged. The whole weight and testimony of the radical critical tradition of the past fifteen years apotheosizes this concept into the holiest law of the film. The father of film-aesthetics, fifteen years after having expressed the first principle of cinematography, again develops a statement on movement as an article of undying cinematic faith:

"The only real thing in the motion picture is movement . . . It is the failure to appraise at its true value the part played in the motion picture by movement that has been responsible for the obsession with realistic effects which have dominated the greater number of film-directors since the early days of film-art.

"Assuredly, the material of the motion picture must be organized, but its organization should be of the nature of a dynamic pattern, in which each separate pictorial subject is balanced in relation to all other subjects while the component parts of each remain fluid in relation to one another. To enter as an element into a mobile form, the static picture has first of all to break down its equilibrium. It ceases therefore to be a "picture", and, with this, has no further use for the principles of design and

composition as these are employed in the easel painting."* (Italics are mine).

Death to every form that violates this law, the life-law of cinematography !

Death to the talking-film if its formal structure intrinsically threatens the film's chief means of illusion-power, which alone creates the new reality !

Death to any and every new form, invention or synchronization that destroys, or renders impossible, the *montage-dynamics* of cinematography !

The past year has yielded a more analytical and more conclusive statement on movement than any within my knowledge, by one who is perhaps Mr. Bakshy's most worshipful disciple — Potamkin. I offer it for consideration as the final essential preliminary to the study of my categories of dynamic montage:

"Movement is not succession of motions. In cinema movement, no motion may actually take place, but an interval may occur, an interval of time, between two images and that is movement. In other words, movements are two: the actual movement of a body, and the constructed movement attained through time and space-successions (in montage).

"The movement of a film is not cinematic unless it is plastic . . ."

"Dynamics is just another name for the climacteric construction and organization of these various elements. It refers to the accumulative forward march of the film." (Italics mine).

To use a filmic metaphor, the Bakshy-Potamkin statements on movement are one and the same scene photographed from different angles and joined in montage. If the Potamkin statement is a far-flung extension of the father's original, bearing cinema closer to the distant horizon at a furious rate of speed, the father's words, that "(film) organization should be of the nature of a dynamic pattern (etc.)", are holy law, to be defied only at the peril of demolishing the film entirely.

We are only now at the point of determining just what are the *forms* by and through which the movements of the film (i. e., the movements of its physical action, the movement of the film in continuity-progression, the movements of its individual, fragmented parts which constitute an integration of its single major movements, etc.) may be mounted in order (1) to describe events and (2) to express image-ideas. The Bolshevik cinematographers have suggested some of these montage-forms. It is my purpose to submit and to discuss new categories in the light of the present world-advancement of expressive cinematography.

*From *The Road to Art in the Motion Picture* by Alexander Bakshy, published in *The Theatre Arts Monthly* of June, 1927, — an essay for every film-student in the world. The appearance of this man twenty years ago as the first and classical film-aesthete is an early, infallible indication of the priority of the Russians to mastery of the film.

The six categories which I propose are:

(1) SYNTHETIC MONTAGE*

Ideational

(Individually, Sequentially, Episodically, Organically, Compositionally).

- (2) Montage of Static Group Combinations
- (3) Montage of the Transition from the Static to the Dynamic (and reverse)
- (4) Montage of the Continuance and the Direction of Movement, which includes the dynamics of the moving camera.
- (5) Montage of Objectification
- (6) MONTAGE OF THE MOVEMENT-FORMS OF THE FILM.

The progress of contemporary cinematography is towards a greater and greater, and deeper and deeper expressiveness. In its march towards mind, the film has increasing recourse to image-symbols, which are drawn from the deep well of the psychologic image-experience of the race of man. In grinding harder its scientifically found material, and in digging deeper into the experiential consciousness (the unconscious mind) of man, the film seeks to find those images, those symbols, those visual forms which may be useful in the task of re-conditioning the mind and soul of man. For this task, the cinematographers of our day (mainly, if not only, the Bolsheviks), have recruited for their fighting image-forces the vast army of data and truths established by modern science. Pavlov, Freud, Adler, Jung, Bescherew, all schools and prominent "free lances" in the field of psychologic research, not to mention in the spheres of Psychopathology, clinical psychiatry, chemistry, physics, mathematics, anthropology, ethnology, ethnography, etc., have been drafted for this stupendous educational war against superstition, religious dogma, patriotic "idealism", nationalistic war propaganda (the concomitant of patriotism) and against the money-cults of the West. In a word contemporary cinematography resorts to the great reserve of modern education in order to combat the socially retrogressive factors which, throughout the world, are preparing the world for another catastrophe.

In thus seeking to establish a language that will be felt, understood and accepted by the simple, elemental image-mind of man, cinematography is perforce traveling in the direction of a profounder, yet (for that very reason) more simply and intelligible abstract image-form. The words of Pudovkin are here to remind us again of this vitally significant trend:

"Now, our work is directed to the development of methods of "expressive montage."

*When this essay was first written, last April, it was submitted for critical examination. In criticizing it, David Platt suggested that Naive or Detailed Synthetic Montage (a purely descriptive concept which originally formed the second division of the category of synthetic montage), "be subsumed under Analytical Montage (the decorative as opposed to the structural)." Among numerous other modifications, this suggestion has been followed.

This (new montage-form) means that the joining of the (film)-pieces will express and give the spectator the abstract "conception" or immediate emotional state. This principle also extends to the joining of sound and visual pictures (sound pictures)."

The category of synthetic montage may, in certain notable aspects, be considered as identical with the *expressive* montage-ideology of U. S. S. R. Under it, therefore, I group four other montage-forms, as being, although individually independent, collectively variations of the many *methods* of creating a synthetic montage. But, while all these forms may be utilized to attain a significant expressive montage, synthetic montage, on the other hand, implies also something distinct and specific in the language of cinematography.

Synthetic montage is expressive montage. But, deeper, synthetic montage is also the root and basis of new structural elements that function as means towards the creation of a *philosophical synthetic imagery*.

THE SYNTHETIC MONTAGE unites a number of single images in *immediate sequence*, in order to form the effect of a single "action" (image) and to build that action up in its individual parts, *if the action* (image) *truly represents the synthesis of an image-idea*.

Differently expressed, the synthetic montage gives the parts or fragments of an image-idea in immediate sequence in order to form the effect of an image-whole and *thus to express its essence*.

The synthetic montage, broadly understood, is the montage of the image-idea of the sequence, of the episode or, as in the case of its broadest philosophical application, of the entire image-structure.

This type of montage has already been confused with its hypothetical antithesis, the analytical montage. In my original essay on this subject, I maintained "naive or detailed" synthetic montage to be a variation of the entire category of synthetic montage. The above definition then stated that, "synthetic montage gives the fragments or parts of a scene, etc." But the term "scene" had to be changed in accordance with my acceptance of David Platt's suggestion (referred to), and also if a mere descriptive synthesis of fragments (details) were not to be confounded with the purely abstract or expressive character of my concept of synthesis. The entire trend and striving of the Soviet screen, as a matter of fact, has been a herculean intellectual effort to get *away* from purely descriptive, literal synthesis (naive or detailed synthesis). Manifestly, this type of "synthesis" belonged under a different category, and this category, as Platt has said, is analytical montage.

Another remark I find it is necessary to make is that the necessity of synthetic imagery "*in immediate sequence*" is determined by reference to the structural basis of the film, the limitation of immediacy vanishing, and the nature of "sequence"

undergoing relative changes, according to whether the film is pronouncedly contrapuntal or not. The more contrapuntal in structure the visual-motor graph of the film is conceived, (this means also, the more violently it breaks with the stupid Hollywood tradition of "story-structure"), the less "immediate" is the progression in which the particular image-fragments forming a synthetic image-idea occur in the "sequence" that they create.

There can be true understanding of the two montage-forms, synthetic and analytical, only by studying the distinctions between them and assigning to each its proper useful function in the construction of the film. These distinctions are not arbitrary, but are based on analysis of the actual structure of film-works. It is more than expediency: it is a real aesthetic determinant that requires sharp lines to be drawn here for the guidance and empowerment of the film-workers.

The synthetic and analytical montage-forms are two distinct kinds.

An analytical montage is any montage which analyzes the *continuum* of a single action and builds it up by dividing it into its salient *progressive points of movement*.

Though it breaks up, it builds up. Its breaking-up is its building-up.

The analysis may or may not include intermediate scenes. If no other scenes cut in between the analytical points of the action analyzed, it is a simple, straight analytical montage.

But if there are scenes between the points of the analysis of the single action, the object committing (or the person performing) this action on the screen is called, for reference and technical analysis, the "point of analysis". The basic object of analysis (that is, the particular "image-action" analyzed) is the *structural point of analysis*, and the parts (pieces of image-fragments) of the analysis made of this initial object, are the *functional points of analysis*. (This terminology, of course, is strictly utilitarian, based on method and the stipulations of technical analysis).

Here we may avail ourselves of a useful analogy. We may at this point remark the interesting and useful parallelism between this analysis-division of a scene made in order to build up film-reality, and the idea of Aristotle, in that part of his *Metaphysics* which treats of the divisibility of motion, — a suggestive analogy that will, in course of time, carry cinematography into more universal territory.

Motion, according to the Greek philosopher, is divisible in two respects:

- (a) in respect of the time it occupies
- (b) in respect of the separate movements of the moving body.

If we apply this primitive division of motion to the material which at the present time is the major film-stuff to be dealt with, and consider the relationship between the laws respectively governing each, we see that *the motion of every montage-scene has two points of structure from which to be analyzed*, — temporal and spatial. A scene may be analyzed according to the tempo of

- (a) the action, or
- (b) the time-cutting, or

- (c) according to the points plane-space of the movement.

a and *b* are temporal divisions, *c* is spatial.

It must be borne in mind that I am not trying to construct a parallelistic metaphysic with Aristotle as its starting-point. Such adherence to the cine-metaphysics of Aristotle's universe (governed as it is by a motionless God, the product of the unfulfilled psycho-graphic experience of the Hellenes), would be unjustified if only out of consideration of the wealth of analogical instruction that a Bergson's motion-deified universe yields. I am merely attempting to suggest the way towards a true formulation of analytical montage-methods, and towards film-methodology in general. It will be recognized that between the divisibility Aristotle found in the motion of the world-stuff and the divisibility of the motion of film-reality, as stipulated, there exists only a temporary analogy of identity, and the time is not far distant when the analogy between these two divisibilities will no longer suffice as suggestions of *method*, for the emergence of cinematography into spheres of hitherto unknown reality will extend the field, and create new possibilities, for complicated space and motion analyses. But now, although the mathematical philosophers of the present time have gone immeasurably beyond this, cinematography develops aesthetically, despite the colossal Bolshevik achievement, with a wearying slowness, due chiefly to the international effect of the damaging, retrogressive Hollywood influence. Without ignoring the world-significance of Griffith's early work, and particularly of the structural lessons of *Intolerance*, the film-revolutionary movement is confronted with the enormous task of combatting and vitiating this influence in every sphere of cinematographic work

On the foregoing basis, an example of a simple analytical montage is the following:

(From *Potemkin*)

A sailor angrily smashes a plate which bears the words "Give Us Our Daily Bread". In this action he is photographed in three or four quick, successive flash-cuts, each of which shows us his hand as he raises it above his head, in the 3 or 4 points in the progression of its movement:

- (1) plate upraised above his head.
Flash-shot.
- (2) plate descending, face wrathful.
Flash-shot.
- (3) plate as it crashes on the table,
sailor's face tense with anger.
Flash-shot.

This is a remarkable study of the description of the sailor's emotion in its swiftly mounting stages. The smashing of the plate bearing the traditional religious slogan, has behind it many scenes of an opposite state of affairs, and a great many social overtones. The sailor's sudden, frenzied desire to *smash*, is expressed in a powerful movement-analysis: the analytical montage of the entire action.

An example of an analytical montage which includes several different scenes is the following:

(From *Potemkin*):

In the episode of the massacre on the Odessa steps, there is a sequence which shows the death of a young mother. She is first seen in a medium shot, standing against her baby carriage, trying to shield it from the downcoming Cossacks. But their guns find her, and a bullet pierces her stomach. The close-ups of her hands clutching at the abdomen, of her face rolling in agony, of her tottering form, of her sudden fall and death, and, finally, as a consequence of the fall the accidental releasing of the brake on the baby-carriage, which starts bouncing down the steps, are separated in the montage-continuity of this sequence by long shots of the Cossacks and by close-ups of groups and faces in the fleeing masses. The girl is the structural point of analysis. The intercut images of the mass are the functional points of the entire image-analysis. The girl's death-movement is not mounted as a constant, unvaried unit, but each cut back to the girl's sinking body shows another section of the body.

This is also an example of the division of movement according to time-cutting: an analytical montage in which each cut back to the girl reveals her nearer to her death, nearer to sinking completely on the stone steps. The last cut, following flash long-shots of the Cossacks, shows her just as she has fallen to the ground.

Another example of an analytical montage in which the points of analysis are intercut by other scenes, and where the time-cutting of a single movement is forceful, is the following:*

(From *Potemkin*):

THE SCENE IS:

The Marine Guard is called out on deck.

The marines line up in two rows, one behind the other.

THE ANALYTICAL TIME-CUTTING GOES:

- 1.—A marine at the end of the second line, near the lens, is sad and pensive.
- A.—The marines are at ease while the sailcloth is thrown over the group of their comrades to be shot.
- 2.—The sad marine steals a slow glance over his shoulder.
- B.—The sailcloth is thrown and settles down over the heads of the unfortunate men.
- 3.—The sad marine gazes down by his side—thinking.
- C.—Two or three "shots" of "business" elsewhere on deck. The tempo of the film at this point is decelerated. There is hardly any movement. The tension, the expectancy, mounts high.

*In a sense it is not fair to offer this sequence as an isolated instance of analytical montage, just for the reason that it is isolated and not considered as a factor in the total image-structure of the massacre-episode. But for purposes of illustration of my percept, it is perhaps the best single example that I know or remember of a powerful time-cutting analysis. Isolated in this manner, it exemplifies a principle. But actually, it derives its technical and aesthetic value from its position in the organization of the entire episode.

- 4.—The sad marine with his nose pressed against the barrel of his gun. In the time-elapse between this cut and cut no. 3, the sad marine has turned his head forward again and raised it.

D.—More "business" on deck.

- 5.—The sad marine with his head bent low, his eyes cast down, before him.

Here we see how a movement is marked off and rendered meaningful by the time-cutting. While the foregoing is not a precise duplicate of the actual continuity at this point (the letter-cuts for the most part consisting of several individual "shots" of the intermediary action), it none the less exemplifies the principle of the time-cutting analytical montage as Eisenstein uses it. Each time we see the marine, he has performed a certain part of the turning of his head in its course from side to front. The letter-cuts alternate with the number-cuts as the tension of the entire sequence mounts to a point of exciting stillness and momentary, foreboding cessation. When the previous hurried movement-rhythm stops, the movement-sensation (*Gemutsbewegung*) experiences an instantaneous concentration, which "reflexes" in the spectator (the law of reaction-contrast), and the tension-point of stillness — (at this famous tension-point in *Potemkin* the action is suddenly abandoned and there flash before the spectator's eyes, "still" shots of a bugle against a sailor's hip, the flag of the *Prince Potemkin*, the prow of the ship, the flapping of the sailcloth above the heads of the doomed and various other important elements that mount the image-structure here into a profoundly significant and ominous pause) — the tension-point of stillness (1) checks the preceding rush of movement, and (2) prepares both the image-structure and the spectator for the outburst of fury that descends at the crucial moment, in which all currents of movement are mixed together and the rhythm-line steps out of any previously sustained pattern whatsoever . . . Thus this turning-around of the marine's head (together with the above-mentioned scenes that follow) is not only a true analytical montage, but also an imagistic emphasis on the total structural suspense at this point.

These thoughts give us a concise idea of what is meant by analytical montage. The analysis and differentiation of movement-forms is one of the most important instruments at the command of cinematography for the manipulation of optical and emotional attention. We now see that, no matter into how many points of analysis the continuum of a movement may be divided, the montage of analysis only superficially implies the purely descriptive mounting of different pieces in succession. The montage of analysis is the point at which begins the study of the mathematics of film-technical analysis.

This establishes the fundamental distinction between the analytical and the synthetic montage. The synthetic montage, as already mentioned by way of revision, is concerned not with a mere uniting of detail-pieces in succession, nor with the analysis of movement, but with the synthesizing of all images which collectively form a single image-unit expressing the essential, underlying,

radical, abstract, meaning-full image-idea.

The connection between synthetic montage and film-symbolism is immediate, direct, axiomatic. To resort to this figure: Synthesis is a fruit whose core is a symbol. This symbol stands in intermediary relation between the fruit itself (the structure) and the *forming principle* which makes the fruit *itself*. What, after all, is synthesis but *construction in montage* to make *immediately apprehensible* to mind the *radical, abstract image-idea*, which is the genetic conception of the film-work? But if the mechanics of the medium changes, if a Bakshy magnified screen comes into utilization, if a highly complex art of orchestral counterpoint emerges out of the progressive studios of U. S. S. R., will, then, synthesis still be possible of attainment? The answer is: Obviously, it will be more possible of attainment than ever before, nor will its intellectual root-character change. (Radical abstract ideas are constant, however much mechanical instrumentation may change or industrial production multiply). Only the montage-form, and not the radical aesthetic conception, will have to be transposed into a new formal structure. Method will change; but synthesis, which is more than method, though less than end, — synthesis, the construction-force that makes the abstract image-idea apprehensible to mind — will not suffer as an aesthetic concept. Whatever the method, whatever the mechanics, synthesis will still be the intermediary "station" between the abstract image-idea and the spectator (the receiving brain). In order to keep this clear, and in order to anticipate, and thus to guard against, possible confusion should the mechanism undergo further change (as undoubtedly it will), and to assure this sphere of cinematography a certain degree of safety from the inevitable frauds and charlatans who will corrupt these doctrines, I will postulate here a number of fundamental (radical) principles of the image-idea, which are valid for the film in any sphere whatsoever as regards its intellectual motivation and meaning.

PRINCIPLES OF THE IMAGE-IDEA

- 1.— The image-idea is the intellectual and metaphysical essence of the image-whole.
- 2.— The image-idea *underlies* the image-structure and governs it.
(This law is completely Spinozic in its implications).
- 3.— The image-idea radically determines the image-structure (sequentially and organically), and definitively necessitates the image-montage (visual and dynamic).
- 4.— The image-idea is the abstract, synthetic expression of the *secondary raw-material* (as distinguished from the raw-material, out of which the secondary is selected, photographed and creat-

ed*. This secondary raw-material signifies *all the images of the film* as they are mobilized in the brain of the creator to form the *new image-structure*. The new image-structure (as distinguished from the "raw" image-structure of the creator's brain, to which, no matter how ultimately it may be developed, photography and the laboratory invariably add some new element of tone or composition), signifies the *cinematic reality*, compounded out of the primary raw-material (actuality) and the secondary raw-material (of the brain of the creator). Of this cinematic reality, the image-idea forms the *tertiary* cinematic material, but this tertiary material is not a "raw" material (as are the primary and secondary raw materials, which, unlike the tertiary, are either incompletely formed or not formed at all), *since nothing in the film can be metaphysically deeper or more radical than the fundamental image-idea*.

- 5.— The image-idea is explicit in the entire structure of the film. It is implicit in all the film's sequential (and episodic) phases, and in all its individual manifestations. It is violently and pronouncedly explicit in its purely symbolical manifestations. It is implicit in all manifestations of minor or indirect image-symbolism, and in images of referential or inferential value, pertinent to other elements in the film-structure (of deeper value) or to other elements not directly expressed in the film.
- 6.— The image-idea may never be expressed in the image-structure by a *word*, unless that word be of imagistic value, containing within itself the rudiments of an image or an image-composition, as in the cases of Hebrew, or of Japanese or Chinese script. Only such image-words possess the potentiality of becoming a part of the image-structure, that forms the image-whole and of these, the one bearing the greatest potentialities and the most radical significance, is the Hebrew.
- 7.— The image-idea is the sole intellectual, aesthetic determinant of the unity and solidarity of the image-structure. It is the dominating *cause* of its montage (visual and dynamic, sequential, episodic and organic).
- 8.— The image-idea expresses the philosophy of the theme.
- 9.— The image-idea is the jealous God of the cinematic intellect. All deviations from its true and logical transmutation into the projected film-stuff, and all extraneous elements that are permitted to enter (or that perversely creep into)

*I use the term "primary raw material" to mean the same as the term "raw material" in Pudovkin's book. That is, the actuality-stuff that the director selects and the camera photographs.

the final filmic expression of its meta-physical essence, will cause havoc with this expression and fail to communicate its essence to the spectator. Hence, the supreme importance of perfecting the mechanical aspects of the medium and of deciding upon the legitimacy of various current forms of cinema. (For instance, I exclude the speech-film from my aesthetic of cinematography. According to the viewpoint of my doctrine, color is an abhorrence, — a cheap, commercial corruption of the purity and integrity of the film's simple, elemental black-and-white. I have always fought against it, using the Ladd-Franklin optical experiments as a basis of my arguments concerning optical attack and visual appeal).

I hold these principles to be inviolate law of cinema, the mass-art.

It is, of course, not for many film-works that any of these principles hold good, and for still fewer films that *all* of them hold good. These constitute a body of *ideal* doctrine. More than that. I recognize that not even every artistic film can have a radical, philosophical image-idea!

But I also hold that to ignore these principles as a matter of course must, and will, result ultimately in the stagnation and fatal decadence of cinematography as an expressive medium and as an instrument of capturing the mass-mind. The full realization of these principles will no doubt be rare in the history of cinematography. So far, such realization has never been attained, but the cinematographers of U. S. S. R., particularly these world-creators — Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandroff, Room, Dovzhenko, Konzintsoff and Trauberg — masters of montage, have come remarkably close to such realization. In U. S. S. R., I believe, it has not been lack of genius, but lack of mechanical resources, that has made perfection impossible. And then, ultimate and absolute perfection will ever remain an elusive goal, because the mechanization of the medium (despite the greed-inspired efforts of the Americans), is, and will long be, in an inadequate stage of accomplishment. It pleases and excites me to anticipate, however, that the realization of these principles will approximate the highest degree of attainment in Eisenstein's film-interpretation of Marx's *CAPITAL*. Here, the image-idea is already powerfully suggested in the very title!

As a rule, it may be said, any sequence, into which scenes unrelated in physical content are structurally incorporated in order to form the abstract, expressive idea (significance) of the sequence, is an instance of ideational synthetic montage. Eisenstein in a crude way was successful in a precocious experiment with this form in the sequence of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, where the figure of Kerensky mounting the stairs, the bust of Napoleon and the peacock spreading its tail, alternate in a time-cutting synthesis of astonishing power and emotional effect. Again, in the same work, there is the episode of the rising bridge, the massacres in the streets, the advancing riflemen and the hanging of the horse from the drawbridge, — a synthesis of scenes the inconceivable force of which is outmatched only by the stark and terrible idea that unites them and gives them their vital meaning. In every case, the quality of symbolism is inescapable.*

It is here, in this domain, (Ideational synthetic montage), that the real conditioning-process of cinematography must operate. Cinema, to an extent never imposed upon any previous art-form, is confronted by the task of a stupendous revolutionary mass-conditioning. In the work of disestablishing the slave-values of Western civilization (values of ethic, aesthetic, human behaviour, human "ideals", etc.), it has to draw its fighting-forces and ammunition from the arsenal of Western scientific research. It must utilize the despised and relatively neglected science-achievement of the West (which hitherto has been used purely for money-purposes or for the advancement of the war-makers), in order to attack and dethrone the slavery-dogmas of the West . . . Western knowledge to smash Western slavery! And this, too, in application to every society infested with these slavery-principles. In the new methodology of human behavior for which many great isolated spirits of the West have sought (Waldo Frank among them), cinema, by the aid of the ingenious utilization of the ideational synthetic montage, to create radical revolutionary image-ideas philosophically founded, has the dominant place, the most important function. No other art has this responsibility. No other art bears the burden to this extent . . . To establish the radical image in the mass-consciousness, and to impress the image constantly once it is implanted, in order to *give root* to a new, great, beautiful human society — this is the task of the new world-cinema.

Ideational synthetic montage is the least developed, most difficult and altogether the most significant of all montage-concepts. The problems of cine-metaphysics, the problems of expressive montage-construction, and the problems of ideational synthetic montage . . . these are enduringly interconnected. Ideational synthetic Montage opens the door to the contrapuntal method cinematography. "Synthesis suggests to me the power of reconciling opposites in space-time." —David Platt). Not only are counterpoint and synthesis mutually aidful in the montage of cinematic effects; not only do counterpoint and synthesis bestow boundless power and possibility on the explosion-montage which Eisenstein has developed (his mightiest contribution to cinema!); but, the conjunction of these radical intellectual image-necessities emancipates present-day cinematography from the embarrassment of a temporary standstill in its reliance on montage-effects that have been created as a result of limitations (of the medium), rather than through positive, radical creation. As a forceful, participant aid to synthesis, sound too must be admitted into the army of force utilized by the contrapuntal method. Sound-image counterpoint will be — is already, thanks to the Moscow creators, the most powerful coalition of conditioning-forces of the present world-cinema.**

Counterpoint and synthesis (montage- put into the hands of the world cinema-creators the power to express the deepest radical image-ideas of human existence — in fact, to express the radical, dominant image idea, basically underlying Creation, — the image-idea of the *One*).

The second part of Principles of the New World-Cinema, which treats of the Problems of Method, will appear in the March issue of Experimental Cinema.

*It is remarkable how the critics and public of the bourgeois world can glibly and happily ignore the intense, bitter social significance of this vivid symbol. How even the "best-establishment" of the various emeritus-critics, so-called, can refuse to see in the hanging horse the symbol of the martyrdom of the Russian masses, murdered by a labor-exploiting government. Perhaps an explanatory title at this point, calling attention to the situation, might have penetrated to the bourgeois critical "brain!"

**The Bolshevik creators from the beginning pronounced "the new orchestral counterpoint of sight-images and sound-images", "a new and enormously effective means for expressing and solving the complex problems with which we have been troubled owing to the impossibility of solving them by the aid of cinematography operating with visual images alone." (Quoted from the Manifesto on the Sound Film issued by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandroff in the Fall of 1928). This statement must not be accepted in connection with the destructive and confounding use of sound practised in the Hollywood studios.

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EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA is Two Dollars a year in the United States; \$2.50 Foreign.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA is published at 1629 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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Experimental Cinema is published by the Cinema Crafters of America at 1629 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Penna. Contributions should be addressed to the Editors who will not assume responsibility for their safe return unless solicited. Subscription price is \$2.00 a year; \$2.50 foreign.

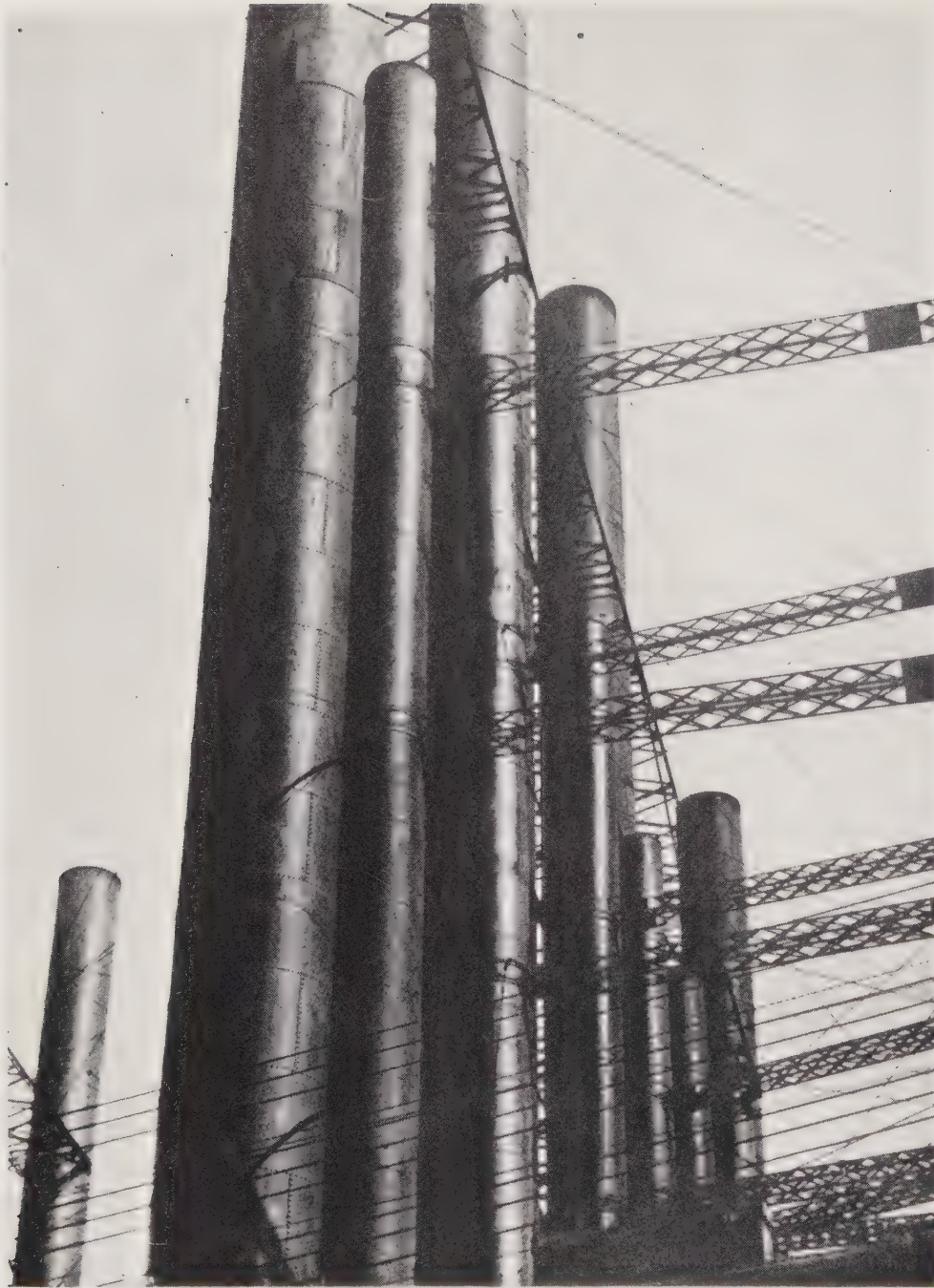


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BY
BRETT
WESTON

FOCUS AND MECHANISM

IT cannot be denied that the feeble rationalism of the great body of modern thought carried over from a long disintegrated theology has failed dismally to penetrate and humanize the forces of the naturalistic world surrounding us today (as reflected in *radio, television, cinema, the machine in general*) forces which are as inescapable as they are directionless. For the first time in centuries man is without a *humanistic*

system or theory of the universe potent enough to meet, cooperate with and give meaning and reality to the new naturalistic synthesis disclosed and still being disclosed by modern science. Whereas in the middle ages, there was at one time powerful reciprocal relationship between the social, political and philosophical forces on one side and the natural or theologic powers on the other, — no such harmony exists for us today. Twentieth century man is without a *symbolology* as inclusive

as that of the Mahabharata or the Divine Comedy which would support him in a union with *nature* and the mechanization of nature, the *machine* and thereby lend profound purpose to all phenomena within its scope. An ideology in which the machine would be incorporated integrally and vitally in the modern scheme both as affecting *the act* or *behavior* as well as the *thought* of man within it. It cannot be stated too often that this lack of a humanistic orientation of the modern world is responsible for a good deal of the unrest and weariness of our time. Indeed, social, political and humane development are so far in the arrears of scientific progress that it becomes more and more doubtful whether the balance will ever be fully adjusted one with the other, at least by rationalism. And to suggest a solution to the difficulty, by deliberate evasion of these new natural phenomena (radio, television, cinema, the machine) and by concentration on the traditional inner forces of man that have so long in the past contributed to his happiness and welfare in a less mechanical age, is the typical escape of the *spiritually retrogressive*. As though happiness is something that can be achieved by withdrawing so naively — and yet so desperately from pain; or chaos something that can be resolved to order in an ivory tower; as though humanistic forces themselves are not determined largely by the naturalistic. The very concept of good and evil itself must ultimately conform to a naturalistic ethos, whether it is the theologic synthesis of the 13th century or the scientific equivalent of the 20th. This type of rationalism however defeats itself as will be seen in a crisis, when it will always be found in the ranks of the most conservative or reactionary elements. Also to offer a solution to the question, in blind acceptance of mechanical science and technological progress, is to fall practically into the same error—a point of view that fails to take into consideration the irrationality — the creative irrationalism of nature since the days of Spencerian science. If it has been proven that even *nature* herself is irrational and imaginative in her behavior (as is now revealed) how on earth is it possible to erect systematic or rationalistic states, societies or philosophies, etc., without allowing for that element of mystery. Thus the so-called humanist and the modernist arrive at the same point without having touched the heart of the subject. Neither of these views has been able to explain or visualize the philosophical or social-political implications of the relation of man to a world wherein it is possible or soon will be possible for him to see an event in any part of the globe the *moment* it occurs. "The world for man today", wrote Jean Epstein, brilliant French cinematographer in "Broom", several years ago, "is like descriptive geometry with its infinite planes of projection. Everything possesses hundreds of apparent diameters which never superimpose exactly. A voice heard naturally, then heard springing from the black graphite of the telephone, then finally re

sounding when the sapphire delivers it from the disc is no longer, whatever one may say, the simple voice, the same voice". It is this new space-time spirit that is awaiting a human synthesis. "An historical reconstruction on the screen strikes out for a few half hours, twenty centuries of time. The instantaneous photograph has discovered gestures which the eye now delivers and the hand reproduces. We notice how suddenly a face on the screen shows itself to be different. A wrinkle appears that we failed to notice for twenty years; but from now on we shall have learned to see it." And if "the speed realized by man has given a new character to civilized life", it will appear, it must appear in the creative forms of today. So as it becomes more and more impossible to eliminate or deflect the main currents of our time as they are manifested in radio, television, aeronautics, cinema, relativity, etc., it becomes more and more urgent that these factors if they are eventually to react to our benefit and not to our havoc be controlled by an ideology nourished by and through free creative contact with these realities. And the first premise of this *vision* will reject the false *dualism* of matter and spirit that has infected our age so long — for a spiritual *monism* more in consonance with the temper of the time — a *monism* that will suggest there is more of the beginnings, the foundations, of the new spirit in creative work outside the art world, than those within it — that the positive values of Machinery, Bridges, Automobiles, Zeppelins, Dynamos, the Cinema — celebrating the union of art and science — are of more importance for our ideology than the literature, painting or music of the day desperately struggling in a cul de sac and most of which exalts negative values entirely outside modern life. It will suggest that the *Cinema*, the *absolute focus* of the new spirit — is great enough in possibilities to not only *contain* but to give *direction* and *purpose* to poetry, music, painting, sculpture, etc. in the throes of a futile romanticism, and that it is the only major force of the day that in any way incorporates the vision of the new universe and the only medium in control of the artist today that can possibly unite with him in attempting a modern humanistic synthesis of the world powerful enough to give meaning and reality to the new naturalistic synthesis of science.

David Platt

In 1900 a Swede found a block of magnetic steel which retained the invisible vibrations of sound and retranslated them for the human ear. The steel, when demagnetized, became deaf and dumb. If matter hears and speaks, do not objects see? Do not lines adjust themselves to one another? A process not yet accessible to the human consciousness. Similarly, do not the vibrations of the cinema have speech, thought, will? Scientific investigators may track down the evidence of this life; hieroglyphists may interpret its system of logic; but is not the imagination to be permitted its faith in an arrangement of living lines which, going beyond pretext and scenery, play the leading role? The art of the cinema offers us a new expression of thought.

Etienne de Beaumont.

IN EISENSTEIN'S DOMAIN

By Dr. ERWIN HONIG (Berlin)

(Translated by Christel Gang from the Original Article Published in Internationale Filmschau)

S. M. Eisenstein, the creator of the *POTEMKIN* film, which, even if only externally, nevertheless enriched last year's world-production, was recently in Berlin to arrange the final preparations for the initial showing of the new film, *THE GENERAL LINE**. He expects to leave soon for America, in order, as he humbly expresses himself, to learn from to make camera angles.

The intellectual and spiritual development of Eisenstein is today one of the most important factors for the advance of the cinema. Whoever has had the opportunity to watch him at his work in the Leningrad Winter Palace, in the arranging of scenes for the Russian October-Revolution, then in the cutting of *The General Line* in his Moscow studio, and now in Berlin in the enforcement of the newly established problems of the tone-film, is perpetually astonished at the stormy intellectual-tempo of this man. The tone-film? It is no longer a dreamed-of goal, or resting-place, — it is an inwardly conquered affair. This director, to whom the intellectual is all-important, cannot be tempted with the promise of the American dollar. He will return to Soviet Russia, as only in that country will it be possible for him to realize his ideas.

This was an established decision already on those chatty winter evenings in Eisenstein's Moscow home — (prominent travelers through Soviet Russia, such as Theodore Dreiser and Stefan Zweig, have sung praise of these quarters). America will bring much to him in the nature of mechanical technicalities, but whatever may be the film which Eisenstein will direct in America, his main thought belongs even now to that gigantic task which he has undertaken, the picturization of Karl Marx's "CAPITAL".

Montage is the pass-word to his plans. The idea is to treat the philosophical foundation of socialism by way of montage from image to image, and by means of image combined with sound, to present it in so clear a form that the Russian worker and peasant can understand it. The well-founded montage of the Russian Revolutionary films can today be duplicated by almost any young man of the Moscow Cinema University (Moskauer Kino-Technikum). But one of them should try to present cinematically "The Economy of Antitheses!" . . . Whoever would dare to do that must possess a profound education and a perpetual "boring" desire for research. Tendencies towards this intellectual montage can already be observed in the earlier films of Eisenstein; atten-

tion may be called to the idea of "War in the Name of the Lord", as it was shown in the film *Ten Days That Shook the World* (October).

The strongest elements of montage the Russian director has discovered in Japanese art. The ancient Japanese theatre "Kabuki" imparted to the intellectual life of Moscow last year a special impetus (impulse). No one rushed with greater intensity upon this stimulant than Eisenstein. The joint application of picture, movement and sound has existed since medieval times in the strictest tradition of this theatre. It is an established montage*. And deeper still lead Eisenstein's studies into the origin of the Japanese script, as a montage composed of drawings and brush-strokes with symbolic expression.

But whoever wants to see the man at his work, must follow him from his studio into his practical teacher-capacity. In Moscow there is the State cinema-university (of Soviet Russia), where Eisenstein functions as one of the most important teachers in the training of young directors. To add spice to the work it happens that this university is established in the former restaurant "Jar", where in the old days Rasputin, during his Moscow sojourn, held his parties and love affairs. Today, those private chambers, instead of being luxuriously furnished, are decorated with a small, simple picture, the head of Lenin, and underneath are printed his words: "The Film is one of the most important means of the State". Only in the light of the State policies of the Soviet system does their treatment of cinema art become clarified. Of greater importance here than the commercial success of the film is the fact that young directors and actors of the Asiatic nations are being instructed. Here a nucleus is being formed to bring about the autonomous, national film for every folk-people. The most vital, agitative thoughts are to be instilled into the people in such a way that they will not be aware of its external source, and the best means to use for a people that is not trained in reading or in writing, is the film, the montage. It is a terrible means of power that is being fostered here.

The cinema university has divisions for all branches, for photography, developing, acting and for directing. A remarkable feature of Eisenstein's ideas is a shooting-room partitioned according to a coordination-system. Every object receives its definite geometrical position. Every dramatic action is divided into its mathematical

*"This film has been changed to "Old and New".

components. The scientific law of film-shooting is being outlined here.

But the heart of this domain is the technical school for young directors. Eisenstein conducts this himself. Tonight there will be exercises on Zola's works. The foundation of naturalism, a scene "Death in a Bakery", written by Zola with minutest observations, is being read and is to be worked out for the following day in scenario form. Another student — we are in a poor country, so one Zola novel is divided among three students — reads the famous part about the flagrant flowers in the garden of the priest Mouret.

When the Zola course is finished, they move on the impression, then to expressionism, and to their mutual friend, the young Russian poet, Babel. Description of an evening's fantastic illumination at Babel's house. After expressionism

comes the chamber-artist, the psychological miniature-painter, Stefan Zweig, and one of the most popularly read authors in Soviet Russia. And, as a final course, the *Ulysses* of James Joyce.

The intense enthusiasm of these young people, who are gathered here around an ideal task under the most unfavorable living and working conditions, is one of the strongest positive forces Soviet Russia has to offer today. It is one of the signs demonstrating that even in the face of the dire need of living quarters and the trying economic situation, spiritual-intellectual power can prevail. But it is also a warning to the rulers of State everywhere, to grant such spiritual-intellectual elements their necessary freedom.

*Literally, in the German, "it is an anticipatory montage" (i.e., anticipatory of modern film-montage). Trans. note.



Evolution of Cinematography in France

by ALBERTO CAVALCANTI

Translated by Richard Aldrich

AT the International Congress of Independent Cinematography, at Sarrez, my remarks on the growth of cinematography from the dramatic point of view were to indicate the solution of some questions with which my comrades and myself were occupied, questions that were the purpose of the meeting.

The silent cinema is dead. Its decline provoked a crisis so violent that we have neither composure, not recoil. Toward the establishment of an historical view of this silent phase, however, an examination of the material already allows formulation of a certain amount of certitude, and an analysis of the aesthetique.

A composite reel made up of a resume of cin-

ematic work in France since 1893 and selections from French films were projected to illustrate the talk at Sarrez.

The first film I think was a release from the Lumière flat in Lyons in 1894. This film was more self-sufficient than evocative; it was followed by a short period of enthusiasm. It concerned the arrival of people by train, and a boat moving around a dock. It carried sufficient novelty and movement to retain attention. Cinematic art began with *L'Arroseur Arrosé* in 1900. Was the cinema aware of its possibilities? Was it going to interpret human emotion, the comic, life itself? Also instead of catching its true voice in

the beginning indicated so clearly in this film, the year lost itself in encumbrances with theatrical tradition. Armand Callier, has shown us at the Studio des Ursulines several very beautiful examples of theatre-film. How is one to forget *Mimosa la dernière grisette*, with Leonace Perret, and above all, *Werther* with André Brulé? The year recalls also *L'Assassinat Du Duc de Guise*, one of the first of the "historic reconstruction" class of film that unhappily remains much in vogue among French directors. This did not at all impede development, for the cinema recovered itself, first with Melies who was the author of one of the first phantasy films.

The cue was not found alone in phantasy films, however; Fevillade turned out a little later the first comedies (the series of the Beleé, for example) played out of doors, which one has not seen again and which in spite of their twenty years seem scarcely obsolete.

The period had not completely passed away when Louis Delluc began to work. He died young, before he had arrived at a fruition of his work. He was a theorist of the first order. Even though they are incomplete, his works for the most part are beautiful specimens and they mark distinctly a new transition.

The cinema reacts definitely against the double influence of the theatre and of letters in the growth of the episodic, the cultural and the comic film. A curious lacuna particularly in French production is the long disappearance of the comic film so abundantly and astonishingly developed in America. Only the films of Max Linder are excepted.

Forthwith in the appearance of masterpieces such as *Judex*, or in America, *The Mysteries of New York*, the intrusion of decor in its turn shackled the growth of the cinema from the dramatic point of view. How can we forget apartments grander than the cathedrals and intimate affairs where one saw scores of figures?

By the side of this ostentation which tended to bring to cinema sumptuous spectacles of the bad music hall, dramatic documents took on in their disturbing simplicity all the power of photographic veracity. One will never say too much of what a valuable lesson these actualities have been, one indispensable in the evolution of cinematography. How could one forget the straining vision of an automobile race accident in the United States? You saw the torn form thrown into the air and fall to the ground. In another you saw a ship that starts to flounder careen on the waves; the sailors let her glide and escape the wreck by swimming in the fatal turmoil of the engulfment.

These cruder devices were used for a long time. The technique achieved adequacy for the time; objectives of great works were seen. The panchromatic film was evolved. Then a diminution of scale cinematography reached a point that would have seemed formerly quite improbable. This has brought forth a precision that seems absolute and consonant to the rhythm of the images. One

such a reduction of scale was a study of a vivid struggle between a mongoose and a cobra; an extreme diminution was that of a soap bubble which burst; another of a revolver bullet penetrating a plank, and another of the flight of a dragon-fly—these mysteries gave up their secrets in the excellent photography of these rhythms, movements and solutions.

Today most improvement in the domain of speed hardly seem to astonish us. The achievement that will again appease us will perhaps arise in the growth of greater unification of cinematic elements.

How much on the side of semblance of the marvelous should one try to attain in a film, The problem calls for realization that is profound. To have reverence for life, to guard its wild freedom, to interpret it in an act of true reconstruction — this is something to look forward to in the cinema.

It is not always possible to renew data sufficiently to have actuality, nor to accept the rhythm revealed in the first unification of the picture. One secures an alien rhythm of the flow of images themselves. This is called montage. It is brought out by means of adjusting simple interior rhythms, and powerfully it accents dramatic action. Among the first beautiful examples of concordant rhythms one may name the mounting of the machine in *La Rove* (Gance) and the summons to battle in *Le Jover d'Echecs* (Bernard).

Reacting in its turn against certain bad usages of montage the travel films, often of great dramatic power, cooperate by their naturalism to reestablish the film in a form that is better balanced. *La Croisiere Noir* (Poerier, *Le Voyage d'Andre Gide au Congo* (Allegret) in France, and Grass, Chang, Moana and others have had a direct influence on film direction.

In the future the cinema finds in pure photography the material of its unique kind of drama. It exists by itself. It is neither a question of theatre nor of literature. Dramatic structure of the film, it seems to us, has arrived at a degree of purity and perfection that is difficult to surpass when the sound element comes into consideration. We thought the formula already found for cinematography was definitive, but instead of proceeding on a new stage of present growth as one expected, the introduction of sound has produced on the contrary a regressive phenomenon. They do not show us the equal of *Train de la Ciotat* and of *Canot Contournant la Jetée* etc. The opera singers and players of the saxophone whom one likes well enough on discs are works of filmed theatre, and we cannot believe such violations will endure. Rather we are seeking to realize in the new form of cinematography the visual and auditory elements that will make up the developed sound film. With sound film a new era is upon us, and cinematography should begin to evolve the destiny that the addition of tone now lays upon the silent drama.

Film Direction and Film Manuscript

by W. L. PUDOWKIN

*Translated by Christel Gang from the German of Georg and Nadja Friedland.
Edition Verlag der Licht Bild Buehne Revision according to Russian Original*

Translation Copyright by Seymour Stern, 1930

Chapter II — THE BUILDING UP OF THE MANUSCRIPT

If we try to divide the work of the manuscript into stages, so that we advance from the general to the particular, we get, roughly, the following scheme:

1. The stuff (subject matter)
2. The script (action)
3. The cinematographic treatment of the action

Naturally, such a scheme can be drafted only if the final manuscript has been thoughtfully established. As I have already remarked, however, the creative process can advance in a different order: individual scenes can emerge (i. e., "come up") during the working-process and can then for the first time be incorporated in the manuscript. It is certain, however, that the final valid form of the work will consist of all three above moments in their sequence. One should always keep in mind that the film, owing to the peculiarity of its construction, (the quick change of consecutive pieces) requires of the spectator an extraordinary strain of attention. The director, and consequently also the author, lead the spectator despotically in their path. The spectator sees only that which the director shows him. To reflect, doubt and to pause for criticism, there is neither space nor time, and therefore the minutest error or slip in the clarity and definiteness of the construction will be interpreted as a disturbing confusion or simply as a meaningless vacuum. One must therefore, before all else, be cautious to obtain the greatest simplicity and clarity in the solution of every single task. For convenient elucidation, we will examine the points of the above-mentioned scheme separately.

THE STUFF (*Subject-Matter*)

The word *stuff* (or subject-matter) is an inartistic concept. *Every human thought can be ultimately utilized as "stuff";* only whether it is effective and purposeful, can be discussed. For a long while the tendency prevailed (and partly exists to this day) to choose such subjects as embrace material that stretches out extensively over time and space. As an example, take the American film "Hate", whose *stuff* may be described as follows: "In all times and among all peoples, from the earliest days unto the present, there has been hate among men, and only where there is hate, follows

murder." That is a *stuff* of enormous dimensions and already the fact that it is extended to "all times and peoples", necessitates an incalculable wealth of material. The result is exceptionally characteristic. First of all, the film-material could hardly be squeezed into twelve reels and the action developed so awkwardly (that the effect, due to the unbroken boresomeness, was very questionable. In the second place, the excess of stuff forced the director to work out the theme very generally, without going into particulars; the consequence was a stark discrepancy between the depth of the motive and the superficiality of the treatment. Only the part which takes place in the present time, where the action is more concentrated, had a strong effect. Particularly, owing to the wealth of subject-material, the forced superficialities were conspicuous. And film-art, young to this day, has other such presuppositions, which do not permit her to tackle so wide a field.

It is noteworthy, that good films are distinguished mainly by a relatively simple theme and by uncomplicated action. Bela Belasz, in his "Film-Culture," "hits the nail on the head" when he says that the failure of many filmings of literary works is to be traced to the fact that the author attempted to force too much stuff into the narrow scope of the film.

The film is above all limited by the determined length of the film-strip. A film over 2300 meters quickly tires. There exists, however, the possibility to show a film in several parts, but this method is suitable only for films of a special kind. Adventure films, whose content consists chiefly in a series of interesting incidents in the fate of the hero, which really have little intrinsic inter-connection and have mostly a self-sustaining interest (acrobatic and directorial tricks), can naturally be presented to the spectator in serial form. The spectator, without losing the impression, can see the second part without knowledge of the first, whose content he learns from the opening title. The connection between the parts is effected through a simple play on the curiosity of the spectator: for example, if the hero at the end of the first part falls into some kind of difficult situation, which is unravelled only at the beginning of the second

part. The film with deeper content, however, whose worth lies always in its total impression, cannot be divided in such a way into two parts.

The influence of the circumscribed space of the film is still further magnified through the fact that the film-artist, for the clear presentation of a thought, needs considerably more place than, say, the poet.

Often a word contains a whole complex of difficult thoughts. Visible appearances, however, which are capable of presenting such a thought symbolically, occur very seldom, and the film-creator is thus forced to mount scenically (*inzenieren*) an extensive image-presentation, if he does not want to renounce the effect.

I repeat, that this contention regarding the limitation of theme is perhaps only a passing one, but at the present time it is necessary to insist on it rigidly.

THEME and CLARITY

On this account a stipulation, that is rooted in the peculiar quality of the film itself, will probably always have to be laid down: the striving towards clarity. I have already mentioned above the necessity of absolute clarity in the discussion of the individual tasks in the film. This is valid in a comprehensive sense also for the work on the subject-matter. If the *basic thought*, which is to serve as *the spine of the manuscript*, is indefinite and vague, the manuscript from the beginning is condemned to failure. Assuming the most careful planning in laying down the foundations of the film in the manuscript, it is very well possible to disentangle hazy suggestions and cloggings. I should like to make mention of the following example from experience: A manuscript writer presented us with an already finished manuscript on the life of a factory-worker of the period before the Russian Revolution. The manuscript is based on a definite personality, a worker. In the development of the action the worker comes into contact with a group of persons, friends and enemies. The enemies do him ill. The friends help him. At the beginning of the film the hero is portrayed as a crude, raw type of human being; at the end he becomes and honest, revolutionary worker. The manuscript is very naturalistically written and yields undoubtedly interesting, living material, which testifies to the gift of observation and the knowledge of the author. In spite of that, it is unusable.

A series of incidents from life, a series of accidental meetings and conflicts which bear no other connection than a correctly timed, sequential order, finally represent nothing else than an accumulation of episodes. The theme as a fundamental idea, which gives expression to the meaning of these events as they are shown, is missing; consequently the single figures in a deeper sense are impersonal, the actions of the hero just as chaotic and accidental as the meeting of passers-by on the street, as they rush past a show-window.

The writer was sensible, and on the basis of our objections, undertook to re-construct the manuscript. He brought the hero into a new line

of development by placing him in lasting relationship to the clearly formulated theme. The basic thought was conceived in a distinct, comprehensive formula: that is, it is not sufficient, to be solely a revolutionary inclined human being; in order to serve the cause, one must possess also a correctly organized consciousness of actuality. In short, the brawling, quarrelsome worker, thirsting for action, became an anarchist. His enemies accordingly stood in a definite, clear front. The impact of the hero with them and his future friends received definite meaning and clear significance, a whole series of superfluous burdens were dispensed with and the confused, intricate, manuscript was transformed into a lucid, convincing structure. One may define the above rendered thought of this story already as the theme, the clear formulation of which unconditionally regulates the whole work and which alone can yield a clear impressive creation. As a rule, it should be noted: *Formulate the theme clearly and exactly, otherwise the work will lose its deeper significance and its unity which every work of art must have.* All further restrictions which influence the choice of the theme are connected with the working out of the action. As I mentioned before, the creative process never occurs in scheduled succession; if one takes up a theme, one must almost instantaneously think the formation of the script.

THE FORMATION OF THE SCRIPT

Already in the initial stage of his work the author possesses a certain material which is later embodied in the frame of the work. This material is obtained through experience, observation, and through imagination. When the *basic thought* of the theme, which *determines the selection of material*, is established, the author must next attack the problem of *organization*. First, the persons acting in the picture are introduced, their relationships to one another are established, their significance in the development of the action is defined and, finally, certain proportions of the division of the total material throughout the manuscript are drafted.

In that moment when the treatment of the action begins, the author makes his first contacts with the conditions of artistic labor. Just as the pure (raw) stuff* can be considered as an absolutely inartistic thing**, so, in the same way, the work on the action is conditioned through a whole series of regulations which are peculiar to art.

Let us begin with the most general: *If the writer thinks through the whole planned out work, he will always construct a series of certain "prop" points which are fundamental for the formation of the stuff and which extend over the total length of the theme. These prop-points throw the general outline into bold relief.* To this belong the characterization of individuals, the particularity

*Stuff — meaning absolutely raw, unformed material.

**In the German the word is "moment", that is, instance or state of condition.

of events which react upon these figures, often also certain details which determine the meaning and force of the upward-and-downward movement.

To think unsystematically about the subject is senseless. (ATTENTION HOLLYWOOD!—Trans. Note) One may not simply say that at the start the hero is an anarchist and then, after a series of mishaps, he becomes a conscious communist. Such a scheme does not release the theme and does not bring us to the decisive transformation.

One must perceive not only *what* happens but also *how* it happens. In the work on the script the form must be already fulfilled. To propose a revolution in the world-philosophy of the hero by no means signifies a high-point in the manuscript. Before a certain concrete form is found, of which the intended effect, according to the author's meaning, may influence the spectator from the screen, the bare thought of the revolution has no artistic worth and cannot serve as a prop-point in the building-up of the script. *These prop-points, however, are necessary: they establish the solid skeleton of the script* and clear away the dead places, which always crop up, if such an important moment in the development of the manuscript is thought through carelessly and unsystematically. The neglect of this moment can have irremediable consequences: particularly, it is easy for elements to creep in which combat the final plastic treatment and thus destroy the whole structure.

The writer can represent his high-points through detailed description; the dramatist through dialogue. The manuscript-writer, however, must think in terms of plastic (external) means; he must discipline his power of imagination to that degree where he is able to present every thought in the form of a sequence of images on the screen. More than that: *he must learn to govern these images and, out of the mass of image-forms that flow to him, to select the clearest and most expressive.* He must learn to master them as the writer masters the word and the dramatist the dialogue. The clearness and definiteness of the treatment depends conclusively on the clear formulation of the theme.

Let us take, as an example, a real naive American film of little worth, which runs under the title "Immer fremd" (Lit. — "Always strange"). Apart from the modesty of its content, it presents an excellent example of a clearly defined theme and of a simply and definitely worked out script (action). The theme is formulated somewhat as follows:

"Human beings of different classes of society will never be happy if they marry."

The building up of the action is as follows: A chauffeur turns down the love of a laundress, because he has fallen in love with the daughter of a capitalist whom he has to drive around daily in the auto. The son of another wealthy man, who accidentally sees in his home the young laundress, falls in love with her. The couples marry. The

small quarters of the chauffeur appear to the daughter of the capitalist like a dog's kennel. The natural desire of the chauffeur, to find, after a tiring day's work, a home-cooked meal ready for him, meets with an insurmountable obstacle — his wife has not the slightest idea of how to go about making a fire. The fire is too hot, the dishes dirty her hands and the half-finished meal falls to the floor. When friends of the chauffeur visit him to spend a gay evening, they behave, according to the spoiled lady's opinion, so raw, that she finally rushes out of the room in an hysterical crying-fit.

But the laundress in the house of the wealthy man fares no better. Surrounded by servants she falls from one embarrassment into another. Her maid, who helps her dress and undress, gives her one surprise after another. In fancy dress she feels ridiculous. Among the guests at dinner she makes one faux pas after another, so that she becomes the target of ridicule, to the worry of the spouse and his relatives.

By accident the chauffeur and the former laundress meet. It turns out that under the influence of their common disappointments, the former affection is re-awakened. Both couples separate and find each other in a newer, happier union. The laundress manages the kitchen in perfect order, and the new wife of the capitalist wears the dress in perfect style and dances a wonderful Charleston.

The manuscript is just as primitive as the theme, but nevertheless one can designate the film as exceptional in the clearly planned construction. Every detail is in place and in immediate connection with the underlying thought: At the same time one feels even in the superficial content-sketch distinctly visible the clear, plastically worked out picture-sequence. The kitchen, the guests of the chauffeur, the elegant dress, the invited dinner guests, and again the kitchen and the dress in another form. Every essential moment in the development of the manuscript is defined through distinct plastic material. As a counter example, I shall reproduce an excerpt from one of the many daily submitted manuscripts:

"A family has fallen into dire poverty. Neither the father nor the daughter can find work. Everywhere they are turned down. Often a friend calls on them and tries with consoling words to cheer up the despairful daughter, etc."

This is a typical example of filmic colorlessness and helplessness in the presentation. One finds here nothing except meetings and conversations. Such expressions as "often a friend calls on them", "to cheer up with consoling words", everywhere turned down", etc. show the complete failure to connect the work on the script with the filmic form which the manuscript should finally assume. Such suggestions can at best serve as stuff for titles, but not for film-shots, for the word "often" unmistakably means "several times", and to show the friend entering the room four or five times would even seem absurd to the writer of this manuscript.

The same is to be said about the notation "everywhere they were turned down."

It is also important that one should not draft in the general preparatory treatment of the manuscript that which is unfilmable and inessential, but only that which one can positively accept as the plastic, expressive "high" points of the film. As prop-points in the above example could be designated the character of a scene, expressing dire poverty, or a deed, (not words), which characterizes the relationship of the daughter to the friend. One could reply that the work on the plastic form belongs already to the subsequent stages and can be left up to the director. Against this, I stress the point once more, that one must always keep in mind the plastic form as the goal. Already at the start of the work, one must know exactly where one wishes to go, if one desires to avoid serious difficulties later. For example, I would draw attention to the above-mentioned entirely unnecessary and unplastic word "often".

We have, however, established, the necessity for the author to orient himself towards the plastic material, which is finally decisive for the form of his presentation.

CONCENTRATION OF THE STUFF

We now turn to the general questions, in particular to the problem of the concentration of the stuff. There is a whole series of rules, which regulate the construction of the narrative, the novel and the drama. They all correspond closely with the work on the manuscript, but to discuss them in detail would far overstep the boundaries of this book. Out of the group of problems dealing with general construction, only one question shall be mentioned here. The author must at all times during the work on the script take into consideration the different degrees of *tension* in the action. This tension must finally cause a reaction in the spectator in that it forces him to follow the picture with lesser and greater excitement. This excitement depends not alone on the dramatic situation, but it can also be evoked through purely external methods. The linking up of the dynamic moment, in the action, the introduction of scenes, which render conspicuous the intensification of the energy of the actors: all this effects the increase of excitement in the spectator and *one must learn so to form the manuscript that the progressive action captures cumulatively the interest of the spectator, so that the strongest emotional factor is ungeared through the climax.* A great mass of manuscripts suffer from the poor manipulation of the attention factor. As an example, one may cite the Russian film *The Adventure of Mr. West*. The first three reels are looked upon with constantly mounting interest. The cowboy, who has arrived in Moscow with the American visitor, Mr. West, falls into a series of difficult situations and gets out of them with a cleverness that constantly builds up the interest of the audience. The first reels, thoroughly dynamic, are "easy to look upon" and

hold the spectator in constantly mounting excitement. But after the end of the third reel, when the adventures of the cowboy come to an end through an unexpected finale, there is a natural reaction in the spectator, and the continuation, despite the excellent direction, is seen with far less interest. And the last reel, the weakest of the whole film, (a journey through the streets of Moscow and through some sort of dreary factories), finally eradicates the impression and leaves the spectator unsatisfied.

As an interesting example of the opposite correct manipulation of the mounting of the tension-moment in the action may be cited the films of the well-known American director, Griffith. He even created a type of film-climax designated with his name, which is being used by many of his followers to this day. Let us take, for instance, the aforementioned film, *Hate*. The young worker, having been dismissed on account of his participation in a strike, comes to New York and then falls in with a gang of thieves. But after he meets the beloved girl, he decides to seek an honest occupation. However the dark elements will not leave him in peace. Finally, they involve him in a murder case and the worker is thrown into jail. The evidence is so unquestionable, that the jury condemns him to death. In the end, the young girl, who meanwhile has become his wife, unexpectedly discovers the murderer. Her husband is already prepared for execution; only the governor has the power to revoke the sentence, and he has just left the city in an express train. Then begins a wild chase to save the hero's life. The woman races in a speedster, whose driver has been given to understand that upon his speed depends a human life, towards the train. In the cell the man confesses before his death. — The auto has almost reached the express. — The preparations for the execution near the end. In the very last moment, when the noose is supposed to slip around the neck of the hero, comes the pardon, which was obtained by the wife with the last degree of energy and exertion. The quick change of these shots (montage-images), the vividly contrasted change of the racing machine with the methodical preparations for the execution of an innocent human being, the constantly mounting unrest of the spectator, "will she get there or not?", all this forces a heightening of excitement, which through its solution in the finale, ends the film happily.

The method of Griffith combines inner dramatic fullness of action with masterly exploitation of external effects. His films can be used as master examples of correctly built-up intensification. A thoroughly worked out script, in which all lines of action are clearly laid down, in which the essential situations of the actors are designated, in which finally, the action is skilfully intensified and mounted in such a way, that solution, satisfaction and climax fall together: such a script is the perfect "expose" for the director, who, in reflec-

tion upon the "plastic material", upon the "image reaction" (optical effect), transforms it into continuity.

THE SCENARIO

The next stage in the work of the author is already the particularized cinematographic treatment of the subject. Up to now, the subject has received no essential cinematographic designation: it has had so to say, only an adaptation for the film based on principles. Now the phase of the plastically animated treatment of the picture comes to the fore. The manuscript must be divided into parts, the parts into episodes, these into scenes, the scenes into single placements, which correspond to the pieces, out of which finally the film-strip is pasted together. The reels (*Akte*) must not be allowed to exceed a certain length and the manuscript-writer must learn to feel them. The average length of a reel consists of from 300 to 400 meter. In order to feel this length correctly, one must take the following into consideration. The projection-machine runs, at average speed, one metre in 3 seconds. Consequently, the entire reel runs within 20 minutes. If one tries to visualize the corresponding scenes, belonging to each single reel as they run on the screen, and takes into consideration the time which they require in running, one can then calculate the amount of scenes it takes to provide the contents of one reel.

A manuscript thoroughly worked out in scenes has the following appearance:

1. Scene

On a country road a peasant wagon drags slowly along, sinking in the mud. Sad and unwilling the driver urges the tired horse on. In the corner of the wagon cowers a figure and huddles itself up in an old soldier's cloak, in order to get protection from the sharp wind. An approaching wanderer stops curiously, the driver addresses him:

Title:

"Is it still far to Nabin?"

The wanderer points with his hand. The wagon continues on its way, while the wanderer gazes after it.

2. Scene

Peasant hut. On the bench in the corner lies an old, white-haired man, covered with rags; he breathes heavily. A little old mother busies herself around the stove and angrily clatters about with pots and pans. The sick man turns around with difficulty and says to her:

Title:

"It seems to me that somebody is knocking?"

The old woman steps to the window and looks out.

Title:

"No, old man. You are mistaken; it is only the wind, rattling the door."

A manuscript worked out in such a form, that is already divided into single scenes and titles, re-

presents the first phase of filmic treatment. But it is still far from the final form of the finished continuity which alone can serve as the fundamental structure for the shooting. One should consider the fact that a whole series of characteristic details are presented here in narrative form, as for instance, "sinking in the mud", "the sad driver", "huddled in a soldier's cloak", "sharp wind", etc. All these descriptive particulars would not be impressed upon the spectator, if they were used merely as "properties" (*Requisiten*) and if the scene as a whole, were photographed just as it is described. In order to bring these particulars into effective development, the film has its own peculiar and effective method, thanks to which, one can draw the spectator's attention to each single detail. Through this method, one does not just casually become aware of "bad weather — two people in a wagon", but each of the details is effectively represented. This method is called Montage.* Some manuscript writers use a somewhat similar means, in that they often bring into the description of the scene, a so-called close atmospheric shot, for example, "Village street", "Festival Day", "a peasant family centered around a lively gesticulating communist; new groups step up to them, they raise their voices loudly in protest, etc". Such insertions are better omitted as they have nothing in common with Montage. The terms "insertion" (*Einfuegung*) and "interruption" (*Unterbrechung*) are absurd concepts, which are merely left-overs of the old misunderstanding of kino-technical methods. All details, which belong to scenes of the aforementioned kind, should not be inserted into the scene, but the scene must be built up out of them. We shall go over to montage, as the fundamental method of effectively influencing the spectator from the screen, when we have given the necessary explanations regarding the fundamental types and the choice of the plastic material.

*This refers only to the montage (or building-up) of the details of *atmosphere*, as described in the scenes on the preceding page.

—Trans. Note

Part II of Pudowkin's book will appear in the next number of EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA

The following books have been received and will be reviewed in the next issue of "Experimental cinema":

"An Hour with the Movies and Talkies — G. Seldes — Lippincott, Phila., Pa.

"The Crisis in the Film — J. G. Fletcher — Univ. of Washington Chap Books.

"Exposition of Decorative & Modern Industrial Art" — Larousse, Paris.

"American Annual of Photography", 1930 — American Photographic Publ., Boston.

"Films of Today and Tomorrow" — Hans Richter, Berlin.

HOLLYWOOD

FOR nine months, ever since the Hollywood Filmarte Theatre at 1228 North Vine Street re-opened its doors with the Dreyer film, *Passion of Joan of Arc*, the American film-capital has had an unusual opportunity to take a course in cinema art. Outstanding pictures from practically every country have been shown here. The nation best represented was, of course, Soviet Russia. What would a film-art theatre be without Russian films? . . .

The following is a list of the Russian films shown in Hollywood since September, 1929, in chronological order:

POTEMKIN
THE VILLAGE OF SIN
TWO DAYS
HER WAY OF LOVE (*Das Weib des Gardisten*)
TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD
IN OLD SIBERIA (*Zuchthaus Nach Sibirien*)
ARSENAL
FLAMES ON THE VOLGA (*Revolt in Kazan*)
THE YELLOW PASS
THE NEW BABYLON (*Kampf Um Paris*)

In some cases the prints were inexcusably bad. *Ten Days That Shook The World* looked like the victim of a Ku Klux Klan or an American Legion mauling. At least one-third of the scenes were out of place or upside down and had to be correctly re-patched: titles were run two, three or four together, with the intercut scenes hundreds of feet further ahead in the material; and the general condition of the print was scratchy and dirty — defects due to the cheapness of the laboratory work and to the carelessness of handling. Such customary defiling of Russian film-prints that find their way to America and other foreign countries naturally weakens the tonal impression of the photography — very important to the general effect in Russian films — and causes the "victimized" film to appear jumpy and old, or badly mounted. Despite censorship, *Arsenal* probably suffered less in these respects than any of the other Soviet productions brought to Hollywood.

How do the American movie people react to the cinema masterpieces of Soviet Russia. How do famous directors, who get thousands of dollars a week, react to the directing of Eisenstein — Dovzhenko — Raismann — Trauberg — Preobrajenskaja — whose collective salary per month in the Soviet Union amounts to less than the weekly check of a single big American "star?" And the "stars" — those magnificently tailored religious idols of the American public — what do the "stars" think of the acting in the Soviet films, of the dynamic close-ups of working-men, peasant women, revolutionaries, etc? How does

Miss Dolores Gorgeous, who teaches millions of young girls the magic by-words: "Oh, don't you understand?" and "I love you, Pierre, I love you" — how does Gorgeous feel when she sees Emma Zessarskaja tell a husky Russian peasant to go to hell, that the old order is over and the new regime of Communism is at hand? What does the little grey haired actress, who plays "mother roles" in sixty-four out of sixty-five Hollywood "tearjerkers", think of the real mothers in *Potemkin*, *Arsenal*, *New Babylon*, etc., not waving flags, but killing officers in defense of their young, not gushing songs about "clouds-with-silver-linings", but risking their lives behind barricades to help their husbands and sons against the imperialist rulers of the world- . . . Hollywood's "cutters" — what do they say when they witness triumphs of montage-cutting in the Tartar's dance of "*Ten Days*, in the massacre of *Potemkin* or in the revolutionary episodes of *Arsenal*? And the cameramen, — how enthusiastic are they when they observe the photography of Russian cameramen — of Tisse Golownia, Feldmann, Demutzki, etc?

It is of course impossible to make a report that will cover every individual reaction. Even the best general statement necessarily neglects to include a great many "buts", "ifs", and "perhapses". These statements are based, sometimes verbatim, on the verbally expressed reactions of American movie-people.

Potemkin and *Ten Days That Shook the World* were by far the biggest "box-office" attractions at the Filmarte. Particularly, *Ten Days*. There was widespread amazement throughout the American film-industry at the night photography of this film, especially the night photography of the perspective mass-shots during the storming of the Winter Palace.

The mass-scenes, both of *Potemkin* and *Ten Days*, came in for a due share of astonishment and disbelief. Directors, assistant-directors, technicians, etc., who were questioned, were emphatic in their conviction that these scenes (specifically, the Bolshevik demonstration and machine-gun episode on Sadovaja street, in *Ten Days*), were not produced but were taken from news-reels. They chose to ignore the fact that at the time of these events, there was no filming at all in Russia and hardly any equipment, and that whatever equipment there was, had been sabotaged by the fleeing bourgeois owners of the few small pre-Revolutionary studios. Similarly, they believed that the character of Lenin was not played but real — news-reel shots of Lenin underground and so on . . .

BULLETIN

A great amount of curiosity was aroused by the hanging horse in *Ten Days*. Directors speculated with one another whether the horse was real or dummy. If dummy — not bad. If real — those bestial Bolsheviks! . . .

There was also speculation, ridicule and general wise-cracking about the symbolism. The Hollywood movie-people wanted to know: "What's the idea of all the statues?" This reaction was noted in respect to practically all the Soviet films shown here.

Directors, cutters, picture-people variously employed (scenarists, continuity-writers, etc.), whose views were sought in course of conversation and discussion, also severely criticized the cutting. They wanted to know why Eisenstein cut back and forth so much and so fast. Soviet films have become known here as the pictures with "choppy cutting". Explanations of the montage-technique are invariably met with complaints about the alleged "strain" on the eyesight which this necessitates. One Hollywood movie-man, who relieved himself of a heated denunciation of all Russian films, regards the "choppy cutting" of these films as an indication of the "backwardness" of their technique and as evidence that the Soviet film-industry must have reached the stage "where the American movies were fifteen years ago" when eye-strain was the price paid for looking at the "flickers".

Minor reverberations of these general critical reactions resounded to the less famous Russian films. For example, much noise was made over the "cruelty" of killing the puppy in Stabavoj's *Two Days*. Here was the proof, right by the "Reds" themselves, God-sent to the righteous, upstanding producers of anti-Soviet propaganda pictures, which depict the Hollywood "conception" of the Russian "revolution", that the Bolsheviks, after all, like the Huns during the war, are fiends who bayonet babies for Sunday pleasure and chew up young girls for evening meals! Although all the American movie-people interviewed were not absolutely positive that they could duplicate some of the scenes in *Ten Days That Shook the World* or *Potemkin*, most of them sincerely insisted that they could make much better films than *Two Days*, *In Old Siberia*, *Her Way of Love*, etc. (on some other revolution) "if they weren't 'in it' for the money."

A few individuals connected with the American movie-world, also "in it for the money", were a bit more willing to credit Eisenstein and the other Soviet directors with some ability and intelligence. They admired, according to their fancy, the photography here, or a mass-scene there, or the dance of

the Tartars in *Ten Days*, or the wheat field scenes in *The Village of Sin* or the tornado in *Her Way of Love* . . .

The reactions of the Hollywood lay public are more difficult to get at.

The average audience in attendance at Filmarte showings is a stormy combination of Los Angeles radicals with "White Russian" emigres — ex-counts, ex-dukes, ex-chamber-maids of the Czar and all the flotsam and jetsam of the late Czar's regime, who have found welcome, shelter and warm beds among the "Aristocracy" of America's movie colony. In between these two antagonistic elements, are all shades and species of individuals of the much-advertised "great American masses".

Nevertheless, practically all intelligent and serious-minded individuals within a fifty-mile radius of Hollywood have generously patronized the Filmarte Theatre, even when it was forced to run films less meritorious than the Russian.

In contrast to this popular support, the studios yielded only a very small percentage of their total population. With the exception of one or two studios, that permitted placards to be posted, no interest was shown. One company requested certain of its directors and cameramen to see *Ten Days That Shook the World* "to learn the real way how to film a revolution"! Another company asked a private showing of *Potemkin* for its technical staff. A third requested certain departments to see *In Old Siberia* . . . Outside of this purely momentary attention, dictated by a specific temporary necessity, the Hollywood studios exhibited no more than passing curiosity, and absolutely no genuine interest, in the Soviet films.

When the wheat field shots of *The Village of Sin* appeared, the audience at every performance of the film, literally moved by the beauty of the landscape and photography, applauded.

Two Days was enthusiastically applauded at the end of every showing, throughout its run.

Ten Days That Shook the World was applauded thunderously throughout the film and at its conclusion. Not only the Communists, but the intelligent bourgeois public, hailed it as a masterpiece of directorial genius and motion picture art.

The tornado scenes in *Her Way of Love*, unique in the films, were acclaimed by the general public every night.

Potemkin, *In Old Siberia*, *The Yellow Pass* — all met with the same enthusiastic reception on the part of the general public.

The manifest conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that the appreciation of artistic films is on a much higher level among intelligent American groups than "appreciation" among technically experience people connected with the American movie-industry. In every instance, the latter exhibited a state of mind absolutely ignorant and offensive as contrasted with the open-minded receptions given the Russian films by Hollywood laymen.

Hollywood, however, is a zoo of many strange animals. The films of the Soviet Union did not always find the path so rosy . . .

That old stand-by, the militant patriot, and his twin, the well-to-do jingoist, condescended to visit an art-theatre, and when they got there, they were shocked to find themselves so cleverly portrayed by Messrs. Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, Trauberg, Ozep, Raismann, Poznansky, etc., that it was just too hot for comfort.

After all, it was alright for Sergiy Eisenstein to use a peacock as a symbol to describe — that is, to "express" — dictators of the engineer and saviour variety; and it was also alright for Dovzhenko's soldier-rebel to face an august military board and calmly announce that he had decided to demobilize himself regardless of their need of being "defended". True, America must be kept "pure" of that sort of thing. But it had all happened in Soviet Russia, and any breach of military, patriotic or parlor etiquette could be expected there . . . Besides, *Ten Days That Shook the World* was a famous film, Eisenstein was a famous director and a great many people seemed to enjoy the spectacle of the Bolshevik Revolution too much for isolated protests to be effective. *Arsenal*, on the other hand, although it gave birth to the suspicion in some patriotic genius's head that the manager of the Filmarte Theatre was trying to build up a "little Soviet", was altogether too abstruse to be understood. After the first two days, when it ran to the tune of the ridicule and wise-cracking of a few mentally empty movie-directors, it played to an empty house . . . But *The New Babylon* was different.

The New Babylon got too close to home to be seen without squirming. Moscow is Moscow, but Paris is almost as much America as it is Paris — that is, politically speaking . . . One is Russia, "Dark Russia", but the other is the Western world. And a good American patriot should not without blushing behold the sight of French patriots being-made-asses-of by being-shown-singing *La Marseillaise* while Communards starve — especially when these patriots are "respectable people" with lots of money. It all gets too close to home: the faces begin to look too familiar. They no longer have that distinctively Slavic expression . . . So the American patriots "blushed" . . .

There were no less than seven complaints, several of them distinguished for their moneyed vi-

ciousness. These came from members of a certain notorious patriotic society known for its kindly habit of blowing up the homes of starving foreign workers. These particular important individuals were overheard to threaten the Filmarte with "investigation". Their country's saviours pronounced *The New Babylon* corruptive, subversive and dangerous. Perhaps they would call attention to the case at headquarters . . .

This encounter between the Filmarte Theatre and the saviours of the fatherland was merely the direct, open manifestation of an attitude which had been growing for months and to which less vociferous, but not less definite, expression had already been given. It is not the first time a purely cultural movement has had to meet insult, abuse and even active insanity on the part of militant patriots, who see red in everything except in their own eye-balls. But in the long run, such manifestations of bigotry and bought love do not avail. In the present case, the overwhelming majority of people who attend such theatres as the Filmarte are happy to be able to witness creative masterpieces like the Russian films. The attendance every time one is shown is the living proof of the popular sentiment out here.

To be complete, this report has only to mention that the reception of the Soviet films by professional critics on Los Angeles newspapers and magazines was in almost every case enthusiastic and intelligent. Rob Wagner in *Script*, Arthur Millet in the *Los Angeles Times*, Frank Daugherty in the *Film Spectator* and a number of reporters on various papers found these films to be the realization of the oldest hopes for motion picture art. Their publicity partly compensated for the American industry's indifference and hostility.

This is the story of what happened when the Soviet film-masterpieces came to Hollywood, the "Capital" of the American film-industry and supposedly of the entire film-world. From the time that *Potemkin* created excitement because of its unfaked realism, to the time that *Arsenal* was laughed at and dismissed as something mad and *The New Babylon* was jeered at by the dollar patriots — not one important personage of the most expensive film-industry in the world came out with a public statement encouraging people to see these works or advising the industry to learn something from them about cinema technique.

Of course, the American film-producers can learn nothing about motion pictures. They know it all. By their own admission they make the "biggest and best" films in the world . . . Hollywood, Cal. S. S.

DECOMPOSITION

UNTIL we learn to differentiate the sentimental and narrative values from the filmic or cineplastic qualities in a film, the latter and greater problem will be neglected.

Each of the arts has its individual medium and the forms and values which it can effect depend upon the medium employed. The director who tries to blend in the film the effects appropriate to other media, injures the aesthetic ensemble of his own medium. Consequently a director's value is dependent upon his ability to project his celluloid results only in filmic terms, and without the intervention of any agency (moral, literary or pictorial) other than the specific cinematic means.

In contrast, we find the entire cinema scene dominated by either the principles of acting, plot, dancing, sound, color; or such mawkish items as dramatic sequences, divisions of climaxes, rise and fall of suspense, the psychology of spectator reactions:—tricks and formulas, and in no sense contributing to the cinema that unique quality which distinguishes the film from other media of expression; and even at best a detriment to true film creation.

The representation of the cinematic world is achieved through the modifications of a surface (screen) by means of the properties of the motion picture camera and projector, (cinematic means). It is the manipulation of these cinematic units (the details that constitute the notation of the cinema) that objects (subject matter) are given a filmic recognition, filmic association and filmic unity, entirely different from the recognitions, associations, and unities that they had before. The business of the director is to integrate the subject matter and medium in a *filmic* synthesis, extracting the essence of an object or situation and projecting it anew and enriched because of that particular filmic unification. This is the process of composition and is the arrangement and unification of subject matter and cinematic notation and not a mere literal reproduction of objects or individuals.

Behind every film is the idea. This idea is twofold; subject matter or theme, (this can be anything, document, nature, abstractions) and the cinematic process. As a result of the modification of subject matter under the stress of the cinematic notation (long shot, close up, etc., position on the screen and in the film as a whole, angle, tempo, duration, action, tone, etc. etc.) a quality or form embracing the essence of both subject matter and notation, is projected. This quality, called *Imagery*, is one of three structural elements in the cineplastic progression of a film. This element of *Imagery* exhibits itself as the greatest compositional state (filmic and psychological) of the

funded cinematic details (matter and notation). Because of the repetitions in time-space projection of shots, (the nature of the film medium) this quality of *Imagery* creates a condition or order called *Movement*. This simply means that our senses connect two or more shots and attribute a dimension to the spaces between. We imagine a line leading from one shot to the other. These spaces between are filled in with all degrees of durations, intervals and stress. When these spaces are ordered, that is, paralleled and organized in time-space sequences they create the second of the cineplastic homogenities called *Movement*. This quality *Movement* is conditioned by the momentum of the element *Imagery* and governed or controlled by the third cineplastic quality, *Time*. *Time* exhibits itself as the tempo, duration, interval and stress of Images, of cinematic notation and as the governing factor of *Movement* and its rhythms.

These cineplastic qualities, *Imagery*, *Movement* and *Time* are the structural means for filmic form. Question as to which of these elements contribute the most to the film, is for the moment unimportant. *Movement* is the very spirit of object or situation. *Time* is the core of *Movement* and *Imagery* is the body and essence of the film medium. Each unreels to project a living whole exactly as the various parts of a body are all seen together and make up the body which consists of and lives because of them all. These qualities have an independent appeal of their own (regardless of subject matter) and form in the cinema can only be created by the arrangements and unifications of the differentiation of *Imagery*, *Movement*, *Time*.

There is no limit to the multiplicity of integrations of *Imagery* *Movement* and *Time*, but their methods of compositional procedure are displayed in the following two types:

First, as an unreeling of single images, one following another in a simple linear projection, with the proportion and the content of the *subject matter* acting as the dominating idea; and the only distortions (if any) in the relation of the *psychology of the subject matter* itself. This is an illustrative type of film. Actions, scenes, characters, atmospheres, ideas, are evoked and *the film is circumscribed by the logic of documentation*. A two dimensional type of composition and at its most fluent will never exceed pattern in painting, melody in music, or narration in literature. Nearly all films to-date are of this order.

More complex, and as yet unknown to the commercial cinema is this second type of film composition. Such a film is projected as a rhythmic order with the intensifications not only of subject matter, but of *imagery* (which is its greatest compositional state) and *Movement* and *Time*. As a

result of a structural integration among these cineplastic elements there unrolls a *filmic* order of continuous movement whose beginning and end are synchronous. A cineplastic ensemble is projected wherein the qualities *Imagery Movement and Time* serve as the generating motif for succeeding sequences of *Imagery, Movement and Time*, and which in integration evolve toward a summit and conclusion. Each new rhythm of *Imagery, Movement and Time* grow naturally out of the initial ones and the compositional steps are wholly dictated by the logic of *Cinema aesthetics*. Such a film contains no climaxes, only a completion, and its formal order is *never* dictated by the values of the subject matter, (social, political, religious etc.). The director communicates with the spectator without the intervention of any other agencies than the specific cineplastic elements — *Imagery, Movement and Time*.

True cinema style implies the ease with which the director employs the structural terms. His method of film articulation will vary with every shade and thought projected in accordance with the needs of filmic form, cineplastic form.

Cineplastic form is the organization by which the details that constitute *Imagery, Movement and Time* (subject matter and cinematic notation) are brought into filmic relations, fused and integrated so that they unite to produce a single cineplastic effect. The more complete unification there is, the richer the form, and hence the better the film.

To recapitulate: — The idea, theme etc. must be expressed solely in terms of *Imagery, Movement and Time*. The director should not project any of the structural terms to such an extent that they distract from the perception of the film as a whole. No isolated effects, either of photography, decor, acting, cinematic angle, tone, movement etc. or overaccentuation of psychological values should absorb the attention of the spectator; but combine to create a filmic whole which *consists of and lives because of* that particular integration of *Imagery, Movement and Time*.

Lewis Jacobs



Strip from Pudovkin's film "Mother", mounted psychologically to convey a filmic idea.

POPULISM AND DIALECTICS

by H. A. POTAMKIN

(Continuation of "Film Problems of Soviet Russia")

The major problem confronting the film-maker of the U S S R is the thorough treatment of the social theme. By thorough treatment is meant non-sentimental or critical treatment. It is the *social idea* as against populism. The latter is the concern with the popular expression as a fact in itself, uncritically. We have known it in politics here; we have known it in the "highbrow" inflation of the popular idiom: "jazz", "slang", "movie", etc. In Russia it evinces itself in professional peasant-poetry exaggerating the peasant

as an ideal, an inimical propounding in the proletarian dictatorship. The critical expression of society in the U S S R is articulated in the Marxian dialectics, and its conversion into the form of the cinema is a structural problem. The solution of this problem determines the degree of achievement in the single instance of a film, as well as in the entire Soviet kino.

Dialectics as drama is conflict — and that is its structure in the film. There is the *THESIS* — the status quo. The *ANTITHESIS* asserts it-

self — the proletariat (combatant, antagonist-protagonist) or the new force. The result is the SYNTHESIS — the new order. The idea-dynamics of the Soviet film is dialectics.

One may divide the history of the Soviet kino to date into three periods: the first is the pre-dialectic period, so to speak, and while it has vestiges even in the present, it is not over-important in the present consideration. The dialectic-film divides itself into that typified by Pudowkin and that being typified by Eisenstein. Pudowkin typifies the usual, and what seems to be the more popular brand. In this film the individual represents, as accumulant, the social movement: first (Thesis) as the apathetic of the order, second (Antithesis) as the collection of the antagonism, third (Synthesis) as the positive explosion of the new. Examples are: the peasant migrant in *The End of St. Petersburg*, the Mongol youth in *Storm over Asia*, the amnesia-victim in *The Fragment of an Empire*, the peasant brother in *The China Express*. Of these the amnesia-victim is more deliberately a dialectic-symbol than the others. He is, in fact, about ready to pass into the objective milieu of Eisenstein.

The dialectics of Pudowkin is more symptomatic than purposeful it is an expression of the social occurrence which is being presented. In Eisenstein the dialectics is the intent and not the incident. It is expressed completely as structure and conveyed as idea. In Pudowkin it is more literary. *The End of St. Petersburg* is the dialectics of the individual expressing the mass. *Ten Days* is the dialectics of mass. Even in his latest film, *The Old and the New* (*The General Line*), Eisenstein does not divert from pure mass dialectics, although he has in *Martha* the individual representing the new collective aspiration. *Martha* is not an accumulant, since she is convinced and collective-minded before the moment of climactic change, the qualitative moment. The mass, peasantry, is itself Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis, a very much more absolute realization than the individual-accumulant. The stress of the dialectics in *The Old and the New* is the machine — the milk-separator, thresher, tractor—which is present at the moments of crises to concentrate the mass-processes into assertions.

The Old and the New is the first statement of dialectics in unfolding. Dialectics is the theme. It comes as an advance and simple statement of the official Dialectic-Film, the film whose theme will be Marx's Capital. The casual examiner may find in *The Old and the New* traces of populism. The narrative is in its bare fable the Broncho Billy ranch-film of the battle between two economic kinds (in the old western cattlemen versus sheepmen); just as *The China Express* in its fable-skeleton is the American railroad serial, and *Storm over Asia* the western-Fairbanks combination — Fred Thomson. But — the difference in the stresses, in the mass-emphases, the proportioning of caress to indictment puts *The Old and the New* far away from the populist.

Populistic impurities are more apprehensible in the romantic Pudowkin, who begins with the individual combatant rather than with socio-structural motive. To the extent that populism diverts the Soviet film from the dialectic motive, that film is unsatisfactory. Motele Spinder, *The Simple Tailor*, directed by V. V. Wilner, is a flagrant instance of a film which divides itself into an overplay of the individuals (though they are supposedly social indicators) and a mass-experience, a people's plight. Here the individual-symbolic does not move within the mass, accumulating the force, as in a film by Pudowkin or as in the case of the peasant-soldier in *The New Babylon*. First there is the individual or individuals within a narrative, then there is the mass. There is no complete, nor even, a considerable degree, of synthesis. The fact that the film deals with pre-revolutionary days, in which the Synthesis, the new order, was not yet achieved does not modify the criticism of its unsynthesized structure. The dialectic-idea can inform *any* subject-matter that is social. The glory of the Soviet kino is that it possesses just that sort of unvacillating motivating idea. *The New Babylon* deals with the Paris Commune, which achieved no Synthesis. Yet the dialectic-idea was contained within the peasant-soldier who expressed the mass verging on the Synthesis.

The problem becomes a simple statement of choice: shall it be sympathy with the individual or sympathy with the social idea? The former tends to be retrogressive in its answer, as witness the recent film by Petrov-Bytov, made of Gorki's Cain and Artem, which belongs actually to the Polikoushka (German-style) period, before the Soviet cinematists had, under the tutelage of Kuleshov, built a kino by studying the cinema at its source in the American folk-film. Petrov-Bytov makes folk an end, POPULISM; the film of sympathy with the social idea makes folk a source and the social experience an end. The latter category is the category that moves forward with the evolving cinema, which intensifies its speculations, extends its human preoccupations and compounds its utilities. It is in this category, the insistent Soviet film, that the U S S R serves the cinema of the world and becomes its mentor.



"OLD & NEW" — EISENSTEIN

THE MODERN SPIRIT IN FILMS

THEATRE AND MOTION PICTURE

by BARNET G. BRAVER-MANN

THE stage and the motion picture make use of the dramatic types: melodrama, farce, comedy, tragedy and burlesque in the delineation of character and scenes, and there any likeness between the two forms begins and ends. The media of film and stage are wholly unlike in the mounting of the completed production. Each form has its own advantages, laws and characteristics, and in our time practitioners in cinema and the theatre have demonstrated their incapacity to utilize fully those advantages and laws. The theatre, for instance, has neglected to enter into the tempo of our time by adhering to the picture-frame, peepshow stage, with its spatial confines for the player and for the movement of the play, instead of devising and constructing stages that would free the drama and the player from the limitations of back wall and border lights.

Since the bourgeois theatre is one of the most conservative of institutions, it may take many years before its leaders realize the effect of its debilitating mechanics and ideology upon both the stage and the motion picture. The theatre might overcome the lethargic pace on its boards by returning to the Greek practice of continuous action, as has been demonstrated recently in *The Trial of Mary Dugan*. This method preserves not only continuity of action, but keeps the situations intact instead of splitting them into three and four acts, and utilizes movement in a manner that is lacking in the conventional modern play, with its time lapses suggested by the falling curtain before an intermission. Why should the spectator attend a play with intermissions, time lapses and interruptions when the same play can be read at home without breaks in the continuity? It would seem that the theatre could return in many instances to the classic forms with profit. For one thing, the stage has obviously distinctive features foreign to the technique of the motion picture, - - such as the actual presence of the actor, the sound of actual living speech, rich color gradations in objects, textures and lighting - - all mingled in a kind of intimacy between audience and actor that is not possible in cinema. Esthetically, there is no more rivalry between the visual power of the best films and the connotative speech in the best plays than there is between an image on the screen and an actor on the stage. Each form has its own place. To say that the screen is an alternative artistically preferable to the theatre is to submit a comparison determined by personal taste rather than by fact. Nevertheless, the stage and cinema, each in its own way, makes us feel things differently and by dif-

ferent means. Where the stage offers a combined emotional and intellectual appeal through the living actor and human voice, the motion picture produces the same effect with its flowing dynamic images and patterns. The images are shadow and light in motion; they must be dramatically and visually significant. This dramatic and visual significance is made apparent according to the manner in which the scenes are planned in the script, then played, photographed, directed and their images mounted. The cutting determines length, tempo and quality of imagery in the mounting, and after that is done, pace is regulated by the projector. Obviously the stage does none of these things because the stage is not cinema.

The cinema gives us visual intimacy of objects and forms - - such as closeups of anything from a pair of eyes to a mass scene containing thousands of images. The appeal of the film is first visual, then emotional, and lastly intellectual. The cinema overcomes space and depth, save in those films wherein the film merchants have sought deliberately to imitate the stage. On the screen a figure may become the size of a tennis ball like the man in the arena of Victor Seastrom's film version of *He Who Gets Slapped* and be magnified to striking proportions that make the nose and eyes fill the screen. It frees us from the physical limitations of time by flashing back into past centuries and cutting forward into the future. It frees us of actuality through such devices as dissolves, fade-ins, fade-outs and double-exposures which lend themselves to moods of fantasy, to liberties with the actual and temporal.

The theatre is bound by the actualities of space and time. Occasionally, a playwright for example Molnar, in *The Red Mill*, specifies a rapid change of scene with sliding sectional walls, that face the audience, each section covering a scene in process of arrangement. But *The Red Mill* is not pure theatre since its technique infringes so heavily upon the movie scene that its effect is wearisome. The theatre play must function on a basis of chronological progression; it cannot cut back into time. In a few plays the movie type of progression has been tried,—notably in *Dear Brutus*, *Marco's Millions*, and *The Beggar on Horseback*, but the success of such plays has not been attained as a consequence of the treatment of time, but rather because of other elements of appeal which neutralized the effect of an undramatic handling of time. Events that happen on the stage must follow one another consecutively. The last act in a drama can not tell us what has happened during the first

act and the third act cannot cut back to the first or second act, nor can the first act alternate with the last act. Least of all, can the stage build up an idea by means of a synthesis of scenes unrelated to each other in physical content, as appears so often in Russian films; in some German and Swedish films.

The theatre mounts productions with scenes on the stage. The screen, flat and two dimensional, flashes shadow-images that are fragmentary reproductions of scenes and objects. The player and the fragments of him on the screen form images . . . visual fragments that show the most delicate motion of the lips, an eye, and contribute to the completion of the idea. An image naturally does not fill physical space as does the actor on the stage. Yet, the images make us conscious of their meaning by their movement on the screen. The theatre offers us physical actuality because unlike the film, it is not a pattern in flowing images, a difference which brings the film closer to emotional experience. The film is not concerned with physical actuality but with physical illusion, which directs its appeal to the emotions through the eye before the observer has time to rationalize his emotional reaction.

On the stage, the resonant voice issues from a living body. Living voices are foreign to shadow-images. Absence of voice puts the image into the category of illusion, although the motion and interlacing of images and patterns may suggest reality. Motions of the fingers, of the hands, of the head may build inner states and all the moods that can be expressed by speech and voice. In the theatre, there is rapport between the emotions of the audience and the emotions of the players; but the images of the screen may stir our emotions just as deeply without this personal relationship. Conversation on the stage directs our minds to past events, which are pictured by the cut-back in the film. Thus images on the screen function similarly to words and speech on the stage. Because tradition has controlled the architectural form of our playhouses, spectators in different sections of the theatre have different lines of vision — those in the front row orchestra, center, look up at the actors; those in rear orchestra see them directly in a straight line; those in either the balcony or gallery look down upon the actors; and those on either side of the house have sharply angular lines of vision. However definitely the stage director may arrange a setting or the action of a scene, the audience gets the effect from different angles. The motion picture presents scenes, the dimensions of whose patterns appear the same to every spectator in the cinema house.

On the stage even the most imaginative effects are bound by actuality. Gauze and color lighting are combined to suggest both mood and actuality. The motion picture, as in Rex Ingram's *The Four Horsemen* to mention only one example, can ignore actuality and with devices peculiar to cinema, depict images, such as horses, chariots and

symbolic figures dashing across the sky and then advancing towards the spectator.

The stage cannot use inanimate objects to suggest mood, thoughts, character, environment, or foreshadowing of events, as is possible in the motion picture. Murnau does it in *Sunrise* with the floating bullrushes; Eisenstein gives a most elaborate and concrete example of the possibilities of meaning in inanimate objects in *Ten Days That Shook The World*. The dramatic aspects of the drawbridge in *Ten Days* make of that mechanism a living thing; Kerensky pictured dreaming of Napoleonic power as he plays with a toy crown and places it on quarter-shaped crystal perfume bottles, repetition of the theatrically despotic assumed pose by Kerensky; the swinging gun in *Potemkin*; the legs of a carcass of meat in the cellar, suggestive of the petty bourgeois butcher's lust in Stroheim's *Wedding March* illustrate the symbolic use of the inanimate object in cinema.

The stage makes no pretense of showing perspective in unlimited space. The motion picture is limited in this respect only by the horizon line where situation may be built by the director: dark, sharp-edged masses in the foreground lend to the illusion of distance on the horizon.

Pantomime on the stage is limited usually in that its action suggests movement but not sound. On the motion picture screen the motion of the players and objects can suggest any kind of sound, from human speech to the whirr of machinery. Alternating scenes are a rarity on the stage. In the motion picture, they are essential to show the actual relation of one situation to another, of one mood to another. On the stage all the action takes place within the limits of set scenes. Despite the efforts of Eugene O'Neill to handle the setting psychologically as a "stage picture" it is always fairly defined over a period of time, no matter how cleverly Robert Edmund Jones may succeed in disguising the actualities of wood, canvass and paint. Here is one of the major limitations of the drama . . . it must conform to the conditions of the theatre. It is possible we shall never see some plays satisfactorily presented until we have greater architectural variety in our playhouses. The necessity for such variety has been proved by the spatial demands of plays like *The Hairy Ape*, *The Beggar on Horseback*, *Lazarus Laughed* and *Processional*.

In the motion picture, action may occur anywhere — on the street, on a mountain top, in the air, below the sea, on the walls of buildings, — and may be depicted from many angles. Lastly, the play written for the stage is arranged to harmonize with the purposes of dialogue in conjunction with conventional stage movements. The stage play is built essentially upon speech; at times it may achieve even literary form. The photograph is built in the language of cinematic images, and these are described in words that compose the continuity. It has no affinity with dialogue, although American studio practitioners are inclined

to use too many explanatory or conversational sub-titles, instead of terse phraseology indicative of a mood, a pause, or a time lapse, bound up with montage. Even so, the scenarist and director who know montage seek to avoid the sub-title and to work wholly with images. Curiously enough, in the current talking pictures, sub-titles are spoken.

The stage director deals with actual situations carried out by players whose "business" he regulates. He works with actual time, in actual space, from the start to the finish of a production. Actual plastic forms, actual time and actual space are his materials for building up to the high point in a drama. But in the cinema, the director works with filmic time, which is not subject to causality: By means of what he does with the piecing together and mounting of the images on the film strip, the director gives the screen a time all its own. Filmic time is a reality produced by the film director, just as he creates its rhythms which have no relation to the actual rhythms of the stage. "The film", writes Pudovkin, "is a succession of visual images moving through their own world, their own time, their own space". The film therefore, is not concerned with the reproduction of actuality as it appears on the stage or in life, but with the *creation of reality through the meaning which the director gives the images* by his mounting in the script, on the set, and in the film strip. His principle tool for forging reality is that of suggestion — the selective visual essence of events, of time, of space.

The basic element of the theatre scene is scenic *totality*. The basic element of the film is the *fragment* of the totality, scene, or object. This distinction so long neglected by Hollywood and Neubabelsberg, was made clear by Fernand Leger, the French painter, who first called attention to this violation of cinematic principles by theatre-minded film practitioners. The strongest, clearest, deepest impressions on the mind and the emotions are inherent in the implication given the fragment by the directorial will. It can suggest a world of meaning by an ear, a stairway, a statue's head, or part of a bottle, all depending upon the film director's skill in montage. The early phase of the film merely was confined to speculation about its possibilities as to motion. It was looked upon as a novelty or stunt discovery. Experiments were limited at first to taking images on the film strip of ordinary scenes or objects, in city, on sea, and in country lanes. Later recruits from the stage began to experiment with the film. Such scenes as were taken by them were in the stage manner and were merely photographs of players going through stage business, illustrated by many long titles that robbed the images of any possible significance. The director, usually from the theatre, indicated the two points between the action, the entrance and the exit as in the theatre, taking scenes in their totality, just as they might

have appeared on the stage. This application of directorial theatre technique to the cinema, plus the influence of players, who for the most part were from the stage and the destructive factory methods of Hollywood, played havoc with the development of the medium of the motion picture. Scenes were mounted in progression in the film-strip the same as in a theatre, instead of being broken down analytically to build definite visual ideas.

In *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance* were first revealed the self-contained elements of the motion picture independent of the stage. Griffith showed that the cinema could soar beyond the architectural barriers of the theatre, that greater emotional significance could be given objects when they were viewed from every possible angle. Instead of using the totality of the theatre scene, Griffith broke the scene into fragments of visual suggestion. He made the camera flexible. He used the visual impression of the moment, of the fragment, as means with which to interpret deeply and dynamically character and situation. The fragment, the dominant important visual element of the film bears no relation to the actuality of nature or of the theatre. The theatre imparts meaning through the totality of all its forms, the film transmits meaning through the fragment of the totality . . . of a crowd, a man, a street, a billiard table, a hand, things seen with the shifting glance of the eye. In the theatre, the spectator must organize his attention. In the cinema, the director must assume the task of organizing the attention of the spectator in the montage.

In this brief exposition of the difference between the stage and cinema, we have sought to consider the fundamental distinctions between the two in the matter of medium and of mechanics. With forms so thoroughly self-contained, wherever imitation is attempted, the result is never satisfying. The theatre can no more be cinema than the cinema can be theatre. Each form has its own esthetic laws and special methods of production; each develops its own practices, and imitation of one by the other reduces such production to a mechanical process that is neither cinema or theatre. The motion picture of tomorrow, of which the triumphant Soviet films are prophetic, will be guided by image-minded poets, artists and philosophers, and will convey meaning only through images freed from the intrusion of the theatre and all other non-cinematic elements.

Note: Consideration here of the differences in the technique of the theatre and of the motion picture excludes the audible film because the latter is neither cinema nor theatre.

From GEORGE MELIES to S. M. EISENSTEIN

by LEON MOUSSINAC

Translated by Vivian Chidechel

THROUGH mere coincidence the films of George Melies, produced from 1902 to 1912, and the last work* of S. M. Eisenstein and Alexandroff, Soviet directors, were projected in Paris during the same week. There was thus afforded an opportunity to suggest a point not yet brought out concerning these films representing in some manner two poles of the silent cinema, (since it is necessary to contemplate henceforth the contribution of the "Talking" and the "Sonorous" before color and relief, moreover near at hand), and expressing the sense and character of the researches of yesterday and today.

George Melies was, by first profession, a prestigitator. In adopting the camera he remained a magician. His imagination and technique led him to play with images, using all the resource of magic that for the most part he had devised, just as he had loved to juggle, striving to amuse, in the dark room of the Dufayel, children temporarily abandoned by parents in quest of bargains. But it happens that these films have kept enough power and fantasy to interest us today in our turn. Ridicule and charm go neighboring there with the movement and ingenuity which, without doubt, inspired the American Mack Sennett, creator of flickering comedies, in an epoch when the French film represented seventy-five per cent of the cinematographic production of the world. The cleverness of Melies is extraordinary, though the literary surrealism attains nothing in *Le voyage dans la lune*, *Les quatre cents coups du diable* and *A la conquete du pole*. And without doubt, if Melies had not taken chances in the drama (*Le Juif errant* gives us a foretaste), his films would have been worth no more than *l'Assassinat du duc de Guise*, "superproductions" of the same period that certain houses of the vanguard were pleased to project these last years for the great amusement of the public.

George Melies represents exactly the cinematographic pre-war comedy with a spirit in some way primitive, which makes his work worthy of the exhibiting which it will gain henceforth. And one can say that *Les quatre cents coups du diable* is a well executed film in that these diverse parts exactly answer to their object. To discuss the quality of the object is another question, but one cannot fail to acknowledge in this film all its historic, its creative value. George Melies will remain the precursor.

Since these heroic times, the photoplay, through a thousand adventures without glory, and some

flashing manifestations, has in vain sought a balance. It is that economic necessities keep it in an exclusive state of dependency, and that by way of expression it carries to its maximum this contradiction of modern societies which opposes art to industry. The placing to a technical point, of the synchronization of sound and image has not been done for disinterested objectives, but only for the temporary salvage of a capitalist organization which had come to be saturated with sentimental stupidity, with romantic or polished banality, and the weak percentage of a public that had through the world stuck to a taste for adventure and a certain need of spiritual evasion, without its being a question besides, of appreciating here the quality of this taste nor the degree of this need.

With *La Ligne generale* one touches to the quick, finally, gravest problems rising by the very intention of the photoplay inasmuch as it strives to a new mode of expression. This film, powerful, pathetic, of a poetic intensity sometimes overwhelming, astonishingly creating life, attacks in front a social problem: the industrialization of the peasants, the collectivization of the soil of the U S S R, a problem and program the more so charged with humanity that to their solution, to their success, is tragically bound, for a time, the destiny of a revolution theme: the poor village, and three elements of dramatic progression, namely the female milk skimmer, a reproductive bull, an agricultural tractor. The whole film is attended with freedom, vigorously developed images radiant with a force of expression, with a lyricism, a truth, not to be forgotten. Here, as with George Melies — if one dares this comparison — the film answers exactly to its object, only this object is quite on another scale. It is no more a question of amusing and making one dream like children, but of exalting life, of carrying away with itself millions of men, of running routines, of abolishing prejudices, of gaining the adhesion of a nation of peasants still uneducated to a social system which constructs a new order on the ruins of individual property. Ambition, one sees, is moving. It remains that the significance, from an aesthetic point of view, of a film like *La Ligne generale* surpasses that of the highest work that the cinematographic has given us since its origin, and that the Soviet cinema has offered us with *The Mother*, the *Armored Cruiser Potemkin* and *The End of St. Petersburg*. It is a question of nothing less than binding intimately, thanks to the photoplay, the world of sensibility and the world of ideas, sentiment and reason, science and

art. This intimate connection, Jean Epstein, before being director, had already alluded to in his *Lyrosophie*, but without any cinematographic solution, and one would find without doubt in the philosophy of Maine de Biran, the premises of such theoretical researches. But S. M. Eisenstein, is the first to discover in the photoplay the practical means of realizing the imposing fusion. Here is how he recently explained himself in an article, *l'Avenir du cinema*.**

"... Where then is there a difference between the perfect method of a symphony and the method perfected in view of the acquisition of new knowledge? It is necessary that the new art put an end to the dualism of these two spheres that are *sentiment* and *reason*. It is necessary to render to science its sensuality and to its intellectual process fire and passion.

"It is necessary to plunge into the fire boiling with practical activity — the process of abstract thought. It is necessary that collected and speculative formula be attached anew to the richness and opulence of the living and palpable form. The formal will must acquire the exactitude of ideologic formulas.

"There is the exigency that we create, there are the exigencies that we propose to the new epoch of art. What form of art is their match? Uniquely and only, the cinematography of the intellect, synthesis of the film of emotion, of the documentary film and the absolute film."

S. M. Eisenstein insists:

"... only a cinema capable of directly uniting dialectic conflicts in the growing of ideas possesses the possibility of penetrating the mind of the great masses of ideas and new perceptions. Such a cinema, alone, will dominate by the form, the summits of modern industrial technique. Finally, alone, such a cinema will have the right to exist among the miracles of radio, television and the theory of relativity.

"The old type of original cinema, as the type of abstract film, will disappear before the new concrete film of the intellect."

There is the question of the progresses of the cinema — we mean of its destinies — placed with force at the same hour when it seems that the international photoplay has reached an abrupt turn in its history. It is that it's a matter of saving a mode of expression of adventures, and that one in the name of the mind, and not one of the most powerful industrial and commercial organizations of the world in the name of money.

From the simple play of images of George Melies to the passionate work of Eisenstein one can measure with emotion a decisive stage entirely marked by these agitations of the world which will accompany for a long time yet, the birth of the cinema.

*"Old and New"

**Monde. November 16, 1929.

Paris Letter

SINCE the advent of the talkies, or more exactly, since little more than a year (and before we question the value of the talkies) we who live in France and love American films are conscious of being poor parents of the Cinema. We read reports of the talking films that we shall never see, and while

you work fervently in America on the construction of a new cinematographic expression, we aesthetes and other cumbersome personages discuss the value or the non-value of the talkies.

But I am forgetting — talking films have been produced in Europe but these are neither of the cinema nor of the theatre, or perhaps more rightly they have taken from these two forms only what is less interesting. In general up to now they have had only very bad photographic theatre such as the "3 masques" or that other abominable film of a man in whom we were wrong to have confidence, namely: E. A. Dupont, and his film "Atlantic".

It is true we also had Walter Ruttmann's "Melody of the World". Ruttmann is a remarkable mind in the European cinema, and if theory, perhaps, has too much place in his cinematographic life, you can expect from him very beautiful films. "Melody of the World" is not correctly speaking a talkie. It is a document compiled for the most part of extreme actuality, but of which he has made the setting in a very obvious way, to which he has known how to add noises or music which astonishingly reinforce the significance of the images. Ruttmann is a musician and that is felt. The setting is not only, as in many Russian films made to dazzle, but a means employed soberly to lead us to a necessary crescendo, or to the comprehension of his work, of his thought. He has not really created a talking film, but he gives us the assurance that he knows exactly how to make use of image and sound, in a manner so agreeably intelligent that we are permitted to expect much from his next films.

The others still use sound as a toy. We are still in the heroic epic where we admire the perfect coincidence of the movement of the lips and the sound that comes forth. I would never have suspected that Europe was so young, pardon, I mean infantile. What we admitted to be the vanguard is distinctly dying in the interval. The talkie had killed it. We knew already some time ago that the vanguard which promised so much and held nothing was engaged in a dangerous impasse from which one could see no issue. But the slowness of mind of certain people is really terrifying. To use a camera; to seek for angles; to discover extraordinary planes is not enough. I claim that any camera enthusiast can obtain today this result: to show a succession of images interesting in themselves but insignificant. The talkie today again substantiates one idea: one does not make a film for images, but because one has something to express. The talkie has proved to us the impossibility of continuing in the way of the vanguard of yesterday. A dialogue which says nothing, which expresses no idea is more blantly stupid than a succession of inexpressive images.

Tomorrow's vanguard will no longer busy itself in telling us anything with common images. It will, on the contrary, tell us much, it will tell us important things with the simplicity that sincerity demands.

Jean Lenauer

PROPOSED CONTINUITY FOR THE ENDING OF "ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT."

by WERNER KLINGLER

(Copyright 1930 by WERNER KLINGLER)

"This proposed ending to "All Quiet On The Western Front" was submitted to & considered by Universal Pictures Corp. but was finally not accepted.

SOUND

PICTURE

IDEOLOGICAL SPECIFICATION

All shots mirror lightninglike the theme of the book and are balanced up in such a manner, that in their retrospective montage of contrasting image-values they lead up to the apotheosis, passing an impressive judgment on the horrors of war.

After Katzinsky's death

LONGSHOT of Paul from behind, staggering out into the open field towards the French lines.

MEDIUM CLOSEUP of a French machine-gun and crew.

LONGSHOT of Paul, walking towards the camera.

CLOSEUP of the French machine-gun, firing.

Sound of firing machine-gun.

MEDIUMSHOT of Paul, as he pauses hit by a bullet, slowly sinking down.

CLOSE UP of Paul's face falling from the upper picture frame towards the lower one.

CLOSEUP of Paul's EYES.

He sees, in a vision of quick-changing images, becoming more and more rapid, the following pictures. (Montage of cutting.)

The action of Paul's vision occurs between the first and last part of his fall to the ground.

(In this visionary action there are shown only shots which have already occurred in the film, except four *semiotic* images indicated by an asterik.)

SOUND	PICTURE	IDEOLOGICAL SPECIFICATION
Machine-gun keeps firing incessantly, but with intervals between.		
	FADE IN DOUBLE EXPOSURE CLOSE UP OF Paul's mother.	
Voice of teacher Kantorek: "PAUL BAUMER, AND I WONDER W H A T YOU ARE GOING TO DO?"		A part of that sentence has already been heard in the mother-closeup, and extends to — — —
	QUICK L A P DISSOLVE TO CLOSEUP of teacher Kantorek in the schoolroom. CUT TO CLOSEUP of the student, Paul Baumer, in the schoolroom, rising with reckless enthusiasm.	
Voice of Paul: "I'LL GO!"		
	FADE OUT DOUBLE EXPOSURE of Paul's eyes. Paul's close up remains in the picture. CUT TO CLOSEUP DOUBLE EX- POSURE of Iron Cross* coming to- wards the camera until it fills out the whole screen.	
Double-print: firing French machine-gun and voice of Kantorek: "YOU ARE THE LIFE OF THE FATHERLAND, YOU BOYS."		
	QUICK LAP DISSOLVE O U T FROM IRON CROSS INTO rain of silvercoins.*	
		The coins should be generic, but not the particular coins of any one nation. The glittering quality should be emphasized photograph- ically.
	LAP DISSOLVE TO CLOSEUP of Christ on Cross* in a cemetery, taken from below.	
	DIRECT CUT OUT DOUBLE EX- POSURE of Paul. Christ remains in the picture.	

SOUND

PICTURE

IDEOLOGICAL SPECIFICATION

V o i c e of Kantorek:
"SWEET and FITTING
IT IS TO DIE FOR THE
FATHERLAND." This
sentence spoken by Kan-
torek covers all the scenes
up to Medium closeup of
soldier Behm. The ex-
plosion of the shells and
the yelling of Behm start
in with the last words of
Kantorek.

CLOSEUP OF BEHM as a student in
schoolroom, shaking his head denying-
ly.

DIRECT CUT OUT DOUBLE EX-
POSURE of Christ. Behm's closeup
remains in the picture. Behm, still
shaking his head

CUT TO MEDIUM CLOSEUP of
BEHM AS A SOLDIER. (Night shot).
Behm is hurled down on the battlefield
by an exploding shell. He jumps to
his feet, blinded, and runs in circles, his
hands to his eyes.

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF KEMME-
RICH (as a student) in schoolroom.

Voice of Kemmerich: "Me
TOO!" From far away,
the roar of cannon and the
tatata of machine-guns.

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF KEMME-
RICH AS A SOLDIER, dying in hos-
pital-bed.

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF ALBERT
as a student in schoolroom.

Voice of Albert: *
"COUNT ON ME!"

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF ALBERT
AS A SOLDIER, getting wounded
during an infantry attack.

Voice of Kantorek: "ARE
YOU MOTHERS SO
WEAK THAT YOU
CANNOT SEND YOUR
SONS TO DEFEND
THE LAND WHICH
GAVE THEM BIRTH?"

SOUND

PICTURE

IDEOLOGICAL SPECIFICATION

CUT TO CLOSEUP of KANTOREK
in schoolroom.

This sentence spoken by
Kantorek is sustained
throughout the quick
montage-cuts and vanishes
only at that shot when
Paul finishes his *fall to the
ground*.

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF dead French-
man.

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF Paul's
mother.

CUT TO LONG SHOT OF common
grave* with many crosses.

CUT TO A QUICK SERIES OF
BLACK AND WHITE FRAMES
flashed in visual synchronization to
the — — —

tatata sound of the firing
machine-gun now very
loud.

OVER THE BLACK AND WHITE
FRAMES FADE IN DOUBLE EX-
POSURE CLOSE UP OF Paul as he
finishes his fall to the ground. (Shot
from above).

QUICK FADEOUT DOUBLE EX-
POSURE OF black and white frames.
PAUL'S CLOSE UP REMAINS.

There is a smile of peace and calm on
his face.

*(The arrangement of these last three
shots represents a new type of montage-
form.)*

The volume of Kantorek's voice,
in the beginning very strong, slows
down gradually during these
scenes, and as Paul falls to the
ground, it seems to come from be-
yond. Thus demonstrating the
spatial and temporal depth of the
vision and the ascendancy of un-
consciousness.

The diminution of the volume of
Kantorek's voice coincides with the
shortening of the tempo of the pic-
ture-frames.

SOUND

PICTURE

IDEOLOGICAL SPECIFICATION

The now highly magnified tatatatata of the machine-gun slowly dissolves

into
the sound of a wireless telegraph. -- --

Sound of telegraph lingers on.

"REPORT" :
"ALL"

".....QUIET ON
THE WESTERN
FRONT",

SLOW FADE OUT OF Paul's face.

After Paul's face has faded from the screen, a series of black and white frames are flashed, visualizing the of the telegraph.

FADE IN CLOSEUP OF a hand, holding the receiver of a German field-phone to ear. (Objectification close-up)

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF a Mouth, forming the words:

CUT TO CLOSEUP OF the mouthpiece of a phone. Camera traveling fast towards it, "creeping" into it. When the mouthpiece occupies the *full* screen, FADE OUT of picture — and darkness remains, while the last words:

are not only heard from the screen, but *at one and the same time from several loudspeakers*, installed in different places about the theatre (some above, some on the sides, some on the floor, lobby).

By such an arrangement, the spectators will directly share all experienced emotions, and the words: "ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT" will echo as a psychological sensation, like a Mythos, stirring up the unconscious mind.

Note:

This sound-montage idea may be used also for any scenes in which the spectator is made to experience the physical and psychological sensation of the players. As, for instance, players heavily involved in battle-scenes (cannon thunder, explosion of grenades, machine-guns, etc.), air-battles (roar of motors, machine-guns, tail-spinning planes, etc.) *

*All montage-ideas, special sound-effects. etc. of the above continuity are fully protected by copyright of Werner Klingler.



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JOAN OF ARC"
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From TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

EISENSTEIN

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SERGEI M. EISENSTEIN, GREGOR V. ALEXANDROV and EDUARD TISSE need no introduction in **Experimental Cinema**. The list of their films to date is as follows:

WORKERS, STRIKE! . . . Directed by Eisenstein, photographed by Tisse. Not released in U. S. A.

ARMORED CRUISER PRINCE POTEMKIN . . . Directed by Eisenstein, photographed by Tisse. Scenario by Eisenstein and Alexandrov. Alexandrov played the part of a Czarist captain on board the "Potemkin."

TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD . . . Directed by Eisenstein and Alexandrov. Photographed by Tisse. Scenario and montage by Eisenstein and Alexandrov.

OLD AND NEW (THE GENERAL LINE) . . . Directed by Eisenstein and Alexandrov. Photographed by Tisse. Scenario and montage by Eisenstein and Alexandrov.

ROMANCE SENTIMENTALE . . . A two-reel experiment in sound, made in Paris in the summer of 1930 by Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse.

At present they are making a film in Mexico. (See the "HOLLYWOOD BULLETIN" in this issue.) The June, 1930, issue of **Experimental Cinema** contained an interesting article on Eisenstein's activities as a teacher in the Moscow Cinematographic University and also on his research into the Japanese "Kabuki" Theatre, on which **The Cinematographic Principle and Japanese Culture** is based.

VSEVOLOD I. PUDOVKIN also requires no introduction. The list of the films he has made in USSR is as follows:

THE CHESS PLAYER . . . a two-reel experiment in analytical and cross-cutting montage, made five years ago. Not released in U. S. A.

MECHANICS OF THE BRAIN . . . a laboratory film made by Pudovkin in conjunction with Prof. Pavlov at the Psycho-Neurological Brain Institute in Leningrad. Studies in the activities of the "conditioned reflex." This important film-document has had "educational" (but not popular) release in this country.

MOTHER . . . The powerful film of the 1905 strikes and revolution based on Gorki's novel of the same name. Banned in the U. S. A.

THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG . . . Produced for Mezhrabpom for the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Released in U. S. A. very much abridged. The original was three hours long.

STORM OVER ASIA . . . Pudovkin's masterpiece. British imperialism in Asia and the Mongolian uprising. Partial release in U. S. A.

He has just completed a film, "LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL."

Victor Turin is the Soviet director of "TURK-SIB."

All Soviet stills courtesy Amkino Corporation.

Experimental Cinema is edited by David Platt, Lewis Jacobs, Seymour Stern. Contributing editors: Richard Aldrich, P. Attasheva, Bela Belazs, B. Braver-Mann, Samuel Brody, Christel Gang, J. Lengyel, L. Moussinac, Edward Weston. Published at 302 East 59th St., New York City. Hollywood office, 1803 Vista del Mar, California. Subscription \$2.00 for 12 issues. \$2.50 foreign. Single copies 25 cents. Vol. 1, No. 3. Copyrighted 1931.

STATEMENT

THIS, the third issue of EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA, makes its appearance after six months of ceaseless effort to raise funds for its publication. After half a year of financial and other difficulties, we are finally enabled to appear—with an intensification and a clarification of policy which will bring EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA into close relationship with the labor movement in America.

The widespread interest that has manifested itself in our two earlier attempts to release the film for intelligent contact in America, encourages us to hope that with this issue, which makes clear the proletarian basis of our organ, EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA will succeed in establishing the ideological and organizational foundations of an American working-class cinema. This is particularly desirable at a time when the current Hollywood movie boasts a banality and a stupidity that seems to wax greater in proportion to the growth in the unsettlement and distress of American life. Two organizations, independent in operation but united in purpose, have already been formed for this task, although much remains to be done in each case to complete the basic direction and activity. These two groups are: THE WORKERS FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE OF AMERICA and THE AMERICAN PROLET-KINO. These are the first two film-producing units of the American working-class.

It is clear to the editors of EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA that Hollywood, while it is an almost inexhaustible source of stupefying "entertainment," is also at the same time the tool of American imperialist political policy, which it serves so faithfully and so supinely through the medium of war films, anti-USSR films, news reels, etc. The United States with its appalling rate of illiteracy is fertile soil for so direct an instrument as the film. The talkie, by eliminating the printed caption, has overcome the last barrier necessary to make the cinema the most simple, the most powerful and the most popular political weapon in existence today.

American imperialism has not been slow in recognizing this. It is wielding this dangerous sword in a most conscious way. There is a bill pending in Congress at the present time calling for the transformation of the movie industry into a public utility under federal control. The United States Government openly cooperates in the production of films glorifying the achievements of American marines in crushing latin-american uprisings. The film, "Flight," was an open attack on Sandino and the Nicaraguan struggle for national freedom from American imperialist domination. Such bluntly jingoistic, flag-waving films as "Wings," "The Mighty," "Tell It To The Marines," "The Patent Leather Kid," etc., etc., are only a beginning.

Thus, the need to develop active film-machinery in the working-class to counteract this nefarious and growing activity, maliciously organized to prepare the American masses for martial suicide in the next war to end war—becomes doubly, immeasurably urgent.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA in future issues will expose in its pages the growth of practices such as those stated above, as well as the source of this capitalist propaganda in the film-industry, where a boycott is now in force on all films and news reels that reveal any evidences of the class struggle.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA will also endeavor in the future, as an inalienable part of the workers'film-movement, to cooperate in the production of films of a nature which will serve to give cohesion to the movement among the masses of movie-goers and which will also serve to counteract amongst these masses the stupefying opiate of the Hollywood product.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA, in conclusion will reveal to students of the film, through important articles, essays, photographs, stills, etc., the means and methods whereby films of the life of the American workers will be adequately produced and presented for working-class audiences.

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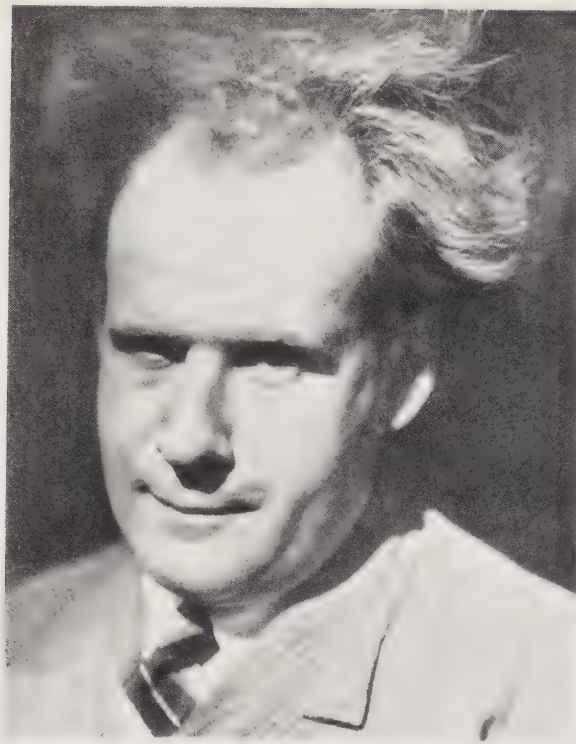


Photo by
BRETT
WESTON

EISENSTEIN

IN America, the film, the one absolute and vital cultural force of our time, is completely imbedded in the ideas and doctrines of a reactionary class. The bourgeois currents behind the puerilities of the film are dead to any promise of unfoldment within the lens. Only the ethos of the class-struggle contains any hope for a new transformation of the film in America.

On the other hand, the development of the cinema in Russia is organically related to the new social forces and economic implications of the era. These forces manifest themselves stirring in the Soviet film. Directors there define the revolutionary working class reality and ideology.

Functioning as one of the leaders of this new spirit is Eisenstein, director of "Strike", "Potemkin", "Ten Days That Shook The World", and "Old and New". Eisenstein in concentrated images expresses cinematically the social forces released by the proletarian revolution. Impelled by this upheaval, he has evolved autonomous laws of cinematic form sharply related to the needs of the Russian masses. The film has been transformed thru his "tonal" and "overtone" montage from a bourgeois opiate into an intense experience in which the spectator becomes a participant in a new and orphic conception.

The creator of cinematic prose-rhythm, Eisenstein, employs a style which enables him to pack and combine multiple perceptions, implications and meanings into each of his images; assigning to each their manifold content, their angle, their tone, their precise action and movement, their rhythm and exact function so that there will be no discrepancy between his attitude and the projected film. Furthermore, he proportions each quality of image:

its context, its tempo, its duration, its interval and position, its "overtone" and its plastic and social purpose in the cinematic plan: **Montage**—the plastic means toward profound effects and the nucleus of every subsequent film intelligence.

The images of Eisenstein are never "photographic" and never merely decorative, but because of their cadre and rhythmic action, their "collisions and conjunctions," their transitions and conflicts—their essential rightness, they infect and charge the mind and emotions of the spectator and instil anticipatory reverberations, both organic and significant, for their response.

It is from this condition that they function: the first image and its qualities prepares for the second, which meets the expectation roused by the rising modulation and impulse, and the third is a challenge and collision,—a response differing from its cinematic associates in a visual way, but yet conforming in an organic precision. A structure is created which introduces a number of impulses and counterpoints whose reconciliation is the activity of the montage groups and their momentum: a structure which piles up emotional effect by junction and multiplication, cumulation and conflict. Any effort to cut or substitute for an image in a sequence, or to speed or slow an image or sequence, or to juxtapose an arrangement, will indicate how organic the whole is and at once injure the esthetic value of the total. Here is a mighty style and a form that evolves and corresponds with the complexity and precision of the triumphant proletariat, the first to dominate the films' organic problem and the most able to saturate its structure with the program of the revolutionary social substance.

LEWIS JACOBS.

THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC PRINCIPLE

AND

JAPANESE CULTURE

WITH A DIGRESSION ON MONTAGE AND THE SHOT

by S. M. EISENSTEIN

IT is a weird and wonderful feat to have written a pamphlet on something that in reality does not exist.

There is not, for example, any such thing as a cinema without cinematography.

And yet the author of the pamphlet in which this essay first appeared¹ has contrived to write a book about the cinema of a country that has no **cinematography**. About the cinema of a country that has, in its culture, an infinite number of cinematographic traits strewn everywhere with the sole exception of—its cinema.

This essay is on the cinematographic traits of Japanese culture, lying outside the Japanese cinema, and is itself as apart from the pamphlet as these traits are apart from the Japanese cinema.

A cinema is: so many companies, such and such turnovers of capital, such and such stars, such and such films.

Cinematography is—first and foremost: montage.

The Japanese cinema is excellently equipped with companies, actors, subjects.

But the Japanese cinema is a complete stranger to montage.

And yet the principle of montage can be identified as the basic element of Japanese representational culture.

Writing.

For writing is primarily representational.

The hieroglyph.

The naturalistic image of an object as portrayed by the skilful hand of Tzanki 2650 years before our era becomes slightly formalised and, with its 539 fellows, forms the first 'contingent' of hieroglyphs.

Scratched out with an awl on bamboo, the plastic portrait of an object still in every respect resembles its original.

But then, by the end of the IIIrd Century, the brush is invented.

In the Ist Century after that happy event (A. D.)—paper.

And, lastly, in the year 220—Indian ink.

A complete upheaval. A revolution in draughtsmanship. And, after having suffered in the course of history no fewer than 14 different styles of handwriting, the hieroglyph crystallises in its present form.

The means of production (brush and Indian ink) have determined the form.

The 14 reforms have had their way. As result.

In the fierily cavorting hieroglyph "ma" (a horse) it is already impossible to recognise the features of the dear little horse, pathetically sagging in its hind-quarters, of the writing style of Tzanki, so well-known from ancient Chinese sculpture.

But let it rest in the Lord, this dear little horse, together with the other 607 remaining "sianchin" ciphers—the first **depictive** category of hieroglyphs.

The real interest begins with the second category of hieroglyphs—the "choy-ee," i.e. 'copulative'.

The point is that the copulation—perhaps we had better say, the combination—of two hieroglyphs of the simplest series is to be considered not as their sum but as their product, i.e., as a unit of another dimension, another power: each, separately, corresponds to an **object**, to a fact, but their combination corresponds to a **concept**. By the combination of two 'depictables' is achieved the representation of something graphically undepictable.

For example: the picture for water and the picture of an eye means—'to weep';

The picture of an ear near a drawing of a door—'to listen';

a dog and a mouth—'to bark';

a mouth and a child—'to clamour';

a mouth and a bird—'to sing';

a knife and a heart—'sorrow', and so forth.

But this is—pure **montage**!

Yes. Exactly what we are doing in the cinema, combining the as far as possible mono-significant, individually neutral (from the content point of view), **depictive** shots, into **intelligible** contexts and series.

A means and method inevitable in any cinematographic representation. And, in its condensed and purified form the starting point for the ideological cinema.

For a cinema seeking a maximum laconism for the visual representation of abstract concepts.

As the pioneer among these paths we hail the method of the late lamented (long lamented) Tzanki.

We have spoken of laconism. Laconism affords us a transition to a further point. Japan possesses the most laconic form of poetry. The "khai-kai" (which appeared at the beginning of the XIIth Century) and the "tanka".

Both are almost hieroglyphs transposed into phraseology. Even so much so that half their value is appraised by the calligraphic quality of their draughtsmanship. Their method of construction is completely analogous.

This method, which in hieroglyphics provides a means of laconic determination of an abstract concept, gives rise when transposed into literary representation to an identical laconism of pointed imagery.

The method applied with concentration to the ascetic combination of ciphers strikes from their conflict a dry definiteness of the concepts determined.

The self-same method expanded into the luxury of a

group of already formed verbal combinations, swells into a splendour of **image** effect.

The concept—a bare formula; its adornment, expansion by additional material, transforms it into an image—a finished form.

Exactly, though in reverse, as the primitive mode of thinking—image thinking, concentrating to a definite degree, became transformed to conceptual thinking.

But let us turn to examples:

The "khai-kai" is a concentrated impressionistic sketch:

"In the hearth
Two shining dots:
A cat is sitting."

(Cheo-Dai)

or:

"An ancient monastery,
The cold moon.
A wolf is howling."

(Hik-ko)

or:

"All is quiet in the field.
A butterfly is flying.
The butterfly has gone to sleep."

(Go-Sin)

The "tanka" is slightly longer (by a pair of lines).

"A slowly walking
Mountain pheasant: its tail
Trails behind.
Oh, night without end,
Alone can I endure it!"

(Khitomaro)

From our point of view—these are montage phrases. A montage plan.

The simple combination of two or three details of a material series yielded a perfectly rounded-off representation of another order—psychological.

And, if the finely ground edges of the intellectual determination of the concepts formed by combination of hieroglyphs are here blurred, yet, in **emotionalism**, the concepts have blossomed forth immeasurably.

Of Japanese writing it is uncertain.

Whether its aspects as a character system (the deterministic), or as an independent creation of graphics, (the depictive) predominates. . . .

In any case, born of the duomonistic mating of the depictive by method and deterministic by purpose, the method of hieroglyph continued both its lines. (Continued—not **historically**—consecutively, but consecutively in **principle**, in the minds of those developing the method).

Not only did its deterministic lines continue into literature, in the "tanka," as we have shown.

But exactly the same method (in depictive aspect) operates also in the most perfect examples of Japanese pictorial art.

Sharaku. The creator of the finest engravings of the XVIIIth Century. Of an especially immortal gallery of portraits of actors. The Daumier of Japan. The Daumier whom Balzac—himself the Bonaparte of literature—in his turn named "the Michael-Angelo of caricature."

And, in spite of all this, almost unknown to us.

The characteristic features of his work are noted by Julius Kurth. Discussing the question of the influence of sculpture on Sharaku, he draws a parallel between a portrait of the actor Nakayama Tomisabro and an antique

mask from the semi-religious No theatre—the mask Roza (an old bronze).

"... there is the same cast of countenance in the mask, also created in the days of Sharaku, and in the portrait of Tomisabro. The features of the face and the distribution of the mass are very similar, though the mask represents an old man, and the engraving a young woman (Tomisabro in a female part). The likeness strikes the eye, and yet there is nothing in common between the two. But it is just here that we discover the most characteristic trait of Sharaku: whereas the mask is carved from wood in almost correct anatomical proportions, the proportions of the face in the engraving—are simply impossible. The distance between the eyes is so enormous as to be a mockery of all sound sense. The nose in comparison with the eyes is at least twice as long as any normal nose can afford to be, the chin in relation to the mouth is out of all proportion; the eyebrows, the mouth, in general every detail considered in relation to the others, is entirely unthinkable. The same may be observed in the faces of all the big heads of Sharaku. The possibility that the great master did not realise the erroneous relationship of the sizes is quite out of the question. He rejected naturalism quite consciously, and, while every detail separately regarded is constructed on the principle of the most concentrated naturalism, their combination in the general composition is subordinated solely to the problem of content. He took as his normal proportions the quintessence of psychological expressiveness. . . ."

(Julius Kurth. "Sharaku", pp. 79,80,81. R. Piper, Munich).

Is this not the same as does the hieroglyph, combining the independent 'mouth' and the unrelated 'child' to form the content expression 'clamour'?

And is this not exactly what we of the cinema do in time, just as he in simultaneity, when we cause a monstrous disproportion of the elements of a normally flowing event, dismembering it suddenly into 'gripping hands, large', 'medium shots of struggle' and 'bulging eyes, filling screen' in making the 'montage' disintegration of an event into shots? In making an eye twice as large as a man's full height? By the combination of these monstrous incongruities we gather up the disintegrated event once more into one whole, but in **our** aspect. According to our treatment in relation to the event.

The disproportionate depiction of an event is organically characteristic in us from our very beginning. A. S. Luria, of the Psychological Institute in Moscow, has shown me a drawing by a child on the theme 'lighting a stove.'

Everything is depicted in passably accurate relationship and with great care. The firewood. The stove. The chimney. But in the central space of the room is a huge rectangle streaked with zigzags. What are these zigzags? They turn out to be—the matches. Taking into account the crucial importance of these very matches for the process depicted, the child allots them a scale according to their due.

The representation of objects in the actual (absolute) proportions proper to them is, of course, only a tribute to orthodox formal logic.

A subordination to the conception of an unalterable order of things.

Both in painting and in sculpture there is a periodic and unceasing return to periods of establishment of absolutism.

An exchange of the expressiveness of archaic dispro-



A Victim of Tsarism

portion for the regular 'table of ranks and classes' of an officialdom-created harmony.

Positivistic realism is in no way the correct form of perception. Purely and simply—a function of a certain form of social structure.

Following a state monocracy, implanting a state mono-

From POTESKIN

typic form of thought.

An ideological uniformation, developing figuratively in the uniformed ranks of the regiments of Guards.

Thus we have seen how the principle of the hieroglyph —'determination by depiction' split into two,

First along the line of its purpose (the principle 'determination') into the principles of the creation of literary imagery.

Then along the line of its method of realization of this purpose (the principle depiction,) into the striking methods of expressiveness of Sharaku.²

And, just as the two outspreading wings of a hyperbola meet, as we say, at infinity (though no one has visited so distant a region), so the principle of hieroglyphics, infinitely splitting into two (in accordance with the functionalism of ciphers), suddenly from this dualistic estrangement once more unites, in yet a fourth sphere—the theatre.

Estranged for so long, once again—in the cradle period of the drama—they are present in parallel. In a curious dualism.

The **signification** (determination) of the action is effected by its narration by a man behind the stage—the **representation** (depiction) of the action is effected by a dumb marionette on the stage—the so-called Dzeiruri.

Together with a specific manner of moving, this archaism migrated also into early Kabuki. It is maintained, as a part method, in classical repertory even to this day. (Where certain parts of the action are narrated from behind the stage while the actor acts in dumb-show).

But this too is not the kernel.

Most important is the fact that into the technique of acting itself the hieroglyphic (montage) method has instilled itself in the most interesting ways.

However, before we discuss this finally, let us allow ourselves the luxury of a digression. Let us pause at the wayside halt of the question of the shot, in order to settle the question of shot-montage once and for all.

A shot. A single piece of celluloid.

A small rectangular frame with, somehow organised into it, a bit of an event.

'Sticking to each other,' these shots form montage. Of course, when they stick in appropriate rhythm.

Thus, roughly, teaches the old, old school of cinematography.

"Screw by screw,

Brick by brick. . ."

Kuleshov, for example, even writes with a brick, thus:

" . . . Should there be for expression any fractional idea, any particle of the action, any link of the whole dramatic chain, then that idea must be expressed, built-up out of shot-ciphers, as if out of bricks. . . "

(L. Kuleshov, "The Art of the Cinema." Published by Tea-Kino-Pechat, p. 100).

"Screw by screw,

Brick by brick. . .," as the song goes.³

The shot—is an element of montage! Montage—is a 'junction of elements'.

A most pernicious method of analysis.

One in which the understanding of a process as a whole (linkage, shot-montage) is derived merely from the external characteristics of its flow (a piece is stuck to a piece).

Thus it would be possible, for example, to arrive at the well-known conclusion that tramcars exist to be laid across streets.

An entirely logical deduction, if one orientate oneself on the external characteristics of those functions they performed, for example, in Russia in the February days of '17. But the Materialist Conception of History interprets it otherwise.

The worst of the matter is that an approach of this

kind does actually lie like an unclimbable tramcar across the possibilities of formal development.

Such an approach predestines one not to dialectical development, but only to gradual evolutionary 'perfecting' in so far as it gives no bite into the dialectical substance of events.

In the last resort, such evolutionising leads either through refinement to decadence or, on the contrary, to a simple withering away from stagnation of the blood.

And, strange as it may seem, a melodious witness to both these cases simultaneously is Kuleshov's last film—"The Gay Canary."

The shot is in no wise an **element** of montage.

The shot is a montage **cell**.

Just as cells in their division form a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo. So, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot, is montage.

By what then is montage characterised, and consequently its cell—the shot.

By collision. By conflict of two pieces standing in opposition to each other. By conflict. By collision.

In front of me lies a crumpled yellowed sheet of note-paper.

On it a mysterious note:

"Linkage—P" and "Shock—E."

This is the material trace of a hot engagement on the subject of montage between E—myself and P—Pudovkin. (About a year ago.)

This is the established order. At regular intervals he comes to me late at night and we row, behind closed doors, on subjects of principle.

Here as before. Hailing from the Kuleshov school he heatedly defended the conception of the montage as a **linkage** of pieces. Into a chain. Bricks.

Bricks, by means of their rows **narrating** a concept.

I confronted him with my point of view of montage as **collision**. A viewpoint that from the **collision** of two given factors **arises** a concept.

Linkage is, in my interpretation, only a possible **special** case.

You remember what an infinite number of combinations is known in physics in the matter of the impact (collision) of balls.

According to whether they be resilient, or non-resilient, or mixed.

Amongst all these combinations there is one in which the impact is so weak that the collision degrades into the even movement of both in one direction.

This case would correspond to the point of view of Pudovkin.

Not long ago I had another talk with him. Today he stands in agreement with my present point of view.

True, during the interval he had taken the opportunity to acquaint himself with the substance of the lectures I had read during that period at the Central Cinematograph College.

Thus, montage—is conflict.

The basis of every art is always conflict. A peculiar 'image' transubstantiation of the dialectic principle.

And the shot represents a montage **cell**.

So, consequently, it also must be considered from the point of view of conflict.

Intra-piece conflict—

—potential montage, in the development of its intensity shattering its quadrilateral cage and exploding its conflict

into montage impulses between the montage pieces.

And if montage must be compared with something, then a phalanx of montage-pieces, 'shots', should be compared to the series of explosions of an internal combustion engine, multiplying themselves into montage dynamics and thereby serving as 'impulses' to drive along a tearing motor-car or tractor.

Intra-piece conflict. It may be of very various nature: it may even be—a conflict in the action depicted itself. As in "What happened to Mary." In the course of a piece 400 ft. long. Such conflict is clearly not subject to examination in the light of questions of cinematographic form.

But 'cinematographic' are:

Conflict of graphic directions (either static lines or dynamic lines).

Conflict of scales.

Conflict of spaces.

Conflict of masses (spaces filled with various intensities of light.)

Conflict of depths.

Any of these and the following conflicts of such degree that they wait only for one push of intensification to fly into couples of antagonistic fragments.

Close and long shots (C.U.'s, M.S.'s and L.S.'s, etc.)

Graphically vari-produced pieces. Pieces solved, by volume with pieces solved by area.

Dark pieces with light pieces, etc

And, lastly, there are such unexpected conflicts as:

The conflict of an object with its normal dimension, and the conflict of an event with its normal temporal nature.

This may sound extraordinary but both these cases are familiar.

The first—an optical distortion of the lens, the second—speeding-up or slow-motion.

The assembling of all properties of cinematography into one formula of conflict, the grouping of all cinematographic characteristics into a dialectical series under one **single** head—is no empty rhetorical diversion.

We thus seek a unified systematization of the method of cinematographic expressiveness that shall hold good for all its elements.

The assembling of them to a series of common interpretation will solve the problem as a whole.

Experience in the various separate departments of the cinema varies in measure beyond compare.

Whereas we know a great deal about montage, in the theory of the shot we are still bubbling about between the Royal Academy, the French Impressionists, and pure geometrisations that begin to set one's teeth on edge.

The regarding of the frame, however, as a particular, 'cellular' case of montage—the smashing of the dualism 'shot-montage', makes possible the direct application of montage experience to the question of the theory of the shot.

The same with the question of lighting. The conception of this as a collision between a current of light and an obstacle, like the impact of a gush of water from a fire-hose striking an object, or of the wind buffeting against a person, must result in a usage of it comprehensible entirely different from that afforded by playing around with 'gauzes' and 'spots'.

The one available such interpretative principle is the principle of conflict:

The principle of optical counterpoint.

And, let us not now forget that shortly we shall have to solve another and less simple counterpoint, namely, the

conflict of auditory and visual impulses in the sound cinema.

At the moment, however, let us return to one of the most interesting of optical conflicts:

The conflict between the limits of the frame and the object shot.

The shooting-angle as the materialisation of conflict between the organising logic of the director, and the inert logic of the object, in collision, giving the dialectic of cinema-viewpoint.

In this respect we are still impressionistic and devoid of principle to a point of sickness.

But, in spite of this fact, a sharp degree of principle is proper to the technique of this also.

The dry quadrilateral, plunging into the haphazard of natural diffuseness. . . .

And once more we are back in Japan!

For, thus—the cinematographic is one of the methods of drawing instruction used in Japanese schools.

What is our method of drawing instruction?

We take an ordinary four-cornered piece of white paper. . . .

And we cram onto it, in most cases even without using the corners (the edges are usually grease-stained with long sweating over it), some tedious caryatid, some vain Corinthian capital, or a plaster Dante (not the juggler at the Moscow Ermitage, but the other one—Alighieri, the comedy writer.)

The Japanese do the opposite.

Here's a branch of cherry-tree, or a landscape with a sailing boat.

And the pupil extracts from its whole, by means of a square, or circle, or a rectangle, a composition unit.

He takes a frame!

And just by these two ways of teaching drawing are characterised the two basic tendencies struggling in the cinema of today.

The one—the expiring method of artificial spatial organisation of the event in front of the lens.

From the 'direction' of a sequence, to the erection of a Tower of Babel in the literal sense, in front of the lens.

And the other—a 'picking-out' by the camera, organisation by its means. The hewing of a piece of actuality by means of the lens.

However, now, at the present moment, when the centre of attraction is beginning, in the ideological cinema, finally to be transferred from the material of the cinema as such into 'deductions and conclusions' formed by the order of its approximation, both schools lose the importance of their differences and can quietly blend into a synthesis.

Some pages back we lost, like a golosh in a tramcar, the question of the theatre.

Let us turn back to the question of methods of montage in the Japanese theatre.

In particular, in acting.

The first and most striking example, of course, is the purely cinematographic method—'untransitional acting'.

Alongside with mimic-transitions carried to the limit of refinement, the Japanese actor uses the exactly reverse method.

At some moment or other of the acting he interrupts it.

The 'Black Ones' obligingly conceal him from the spectator. And lo—he is resurrected in a new make-up. A new wig. Characterising another stage (degree) of his emotional state.

Thus, for example, in the play "Narukami" is solved the transition of Sadandzi from drunkenness to madness.

By a mechanical cut to it. And a change in his collection (armoury) of coloured streaks. On his face, emphasizing those of them whose lot it is to fulfill a task of higher intensity than that allotted to those used in the first make-up.

This method is organic to the film. The forced introduction into the film, by the European acting tradition, of pieces of 'emotional transitions' is yet another influence forcing the cinema to mark time. Whereas the method of 'cut' acting makes possible the construction of entirely new methods. The supplantation of one changing actor-face by a scale of vari-mooded type-faces always affords a much more acutely expressive result than that enabled by the surface, too receptive and devoid of organic resistance, of the face of a professional actor.

The banishing of the intervals between the polar stages of expression of face in sharp contrast has been used by me in our new village picture. By this means is achieved a greater sharpness in the 'play of doubt' around the separator. Will the milk thicken or no? Trickery? Wealth? Here the psychological process of the play of motifs—faith and doubt—is disintegrated into the two extreme positions of joy (confidence) and gloom (disillusionment). Moreover there is a sharp emphasizing of this by light (in

head. A disintegration into shots. With the shortening of the separate successive constituents at the approach towards the . . . tragic end—death.

By shaking himself free from the yoke of simple naturalism, the actor is enabled by this method entirely to grip the spectator by 'rhythms', thus rendering the stage, which in its general composition is constructed on the most consecutive and detailed naturalism (flesh and blood, etc.), not only apprehensible but affective.

Since we now no longer make a distinction in principle between questions of intra-shot and montage, we may here cite a third example:

The Japanese makes use in his work of a slow tempo of a degree of slowness unknown to our stage. The famous scene of harakiri in "The Forty-seven Ronin". Such a degree of slowing down of movement is absent from our stage. Whereas, in the previous example, we dealt with disintegration of the linkage of movement, here we have disintegration of the process of movement. Slow-motion. I know of only one example of a thorough application of this same method, as technically employable in the cinema, for a compositionally thought-out end. Usually it is used either for a depiction, as "The Submarine Kingdom" ("The Thief of Bagdad"), or for a dream ("Zvenigora").



THE ODESSA MASSACRE

From POTEMKIN

no wise conforming to actual light conditions). This leads to a considerable strengthening of the intensity.

Another remarkable characteristic of Kabuki is the principle of 'disintegrated' acting. Thus, Sizoi, the female part lead of the "Kabuki" company that played in Moscow, in depicting a dying girl in "The Sculptor of Masks", performed his part in pieces of acting entirely detached from one another.

Acting with only the right arm. Acting with one leg. Acting with the neck and head only. The whole process of the general death agony was disintegrated into the solo playing through of each 'part' separately from the others: the parts of the leg, the parts of the arms, the part of the

Or, more often still, it is just formal spillikens and purposeless camera hooliganism ("The Man with the Movie Camera"). The instance I have in mind is Epstein's "The Fall of the House of Usher". Normally acted emotions taken with a speeded-up camera gave an unusual emotional pressure by their slowness on the screen (judging from the press reports). If it be borne in mind that the effect of the acting of an actor on the public is based on its imitation by the spectator, it will be easy to relate the two examples to one and the same causal explanation. The intensity of the reception increases because the imitative process goes more easily along a disintegrated motion . . .

Training in how to handle a rifle was hammered into

even the stiffest automata among 'raw' recruits 'along dis-integration'...

The most interesting association of the Japanese theatre, however, is, after all, with the sound cinema, which can and must learn what is basic for it from the Japanese—the bringing of both visual and auditory impressions to one common physiological denominator. But I consecrated a whole article in the "Zhizna Iskusstva" (1928, No. 34).⁵ to this point, and I shall not return to it here.

So, it has been possible cursorily to establish the permeation of the most various branches of Japanese culture by the pure element and basic nerve of cinematography—montage.

And only the Japanese cinema falls into the same error as the 'left-drifting' "Kabuki".

Instead of learning how to extract the principles and technique of their remarkable acting from out of the traditional feudal forms of what they act, the progressive theatrical leaders of Japan fling themselves into adaptation of the spongy shaplessness of our own academic psychological naturalistic Art Theatre. The results are tearful

and sad. In the realm of the cinema Japan similarly pursues imitations of the most revolting examples of commercial American and Middle-European market junk.

To understand and apply her cultural peculiarities to the cinema, this is the task of Japan.

Colleagues of Japan! Are you really going to leave it to us?

1. This essay was first published as an epilogue to N. Kaufman's pamphlet "The Japanese Cinema" (Tea-Kino-Pechat. The Theatre and Film Press, Moscow, 1929) and entitled "Outside the Shot." The present text is translated by Ivor Montagu and S. S. Nalbanov and revised by the author.

2. It has been left to Joyce to develop in literature the depictive line of the Japanese hieroglyph. Every word of Kurth's analysis of Sharaku may be applied, neatly and easily, to Joyce.—S. M. E.

3. The quotation is from "Kerpitchiki," a Russian popular song.—I. M.

4. The **Black Ones** in Kabuki are persons attired completely in black and thus relatively invisible. Besides functioning as described, they move furniture and carry out all manner of changes.—I. M.

5. Republished in a French translation in "Monde," December, 1928.—S. M. E.

The Problem of the New Film Language

by VICTOR TURIN*

A CHARACTERISTIC feature of the filmic language of the majority of our films is that it is based on the intellectual sense of the composition. By that we mean that not only the visual appearance on the screen as such, but also the idea behind it, affects the spectator.

A few film-people have expressed this fact in paradoxical form, as follows: **The essence of the film lies not in the images, in the scenes, but between the scenes.** Eisenstein terms this the "fourth dimension" of the film. He means that one does not just see the art-work, but feels and thinks it,—that is, "senses" it. This principle is undoubtedly applicable to the film that is expressed in poetic film-terms.

Every film-work is actually supposed to consist of a series of thought-impulses, and the action to serve only as opportunity for the visualization of these thoughts.

In contrast to the so-called **prosaic** film with its dynamic of **action**, stands poetic film-language with its dynamic of **thought**. Instead of: "I see that he walks," it will become: "I feel, what the artist thinks."

The thought is realized through the action and comprehended in its pure form, without being obscured by the events.

The thought thus becomes the basic element of the montage. The visual unity is only an equivalent of the thought. **The basis is therefore not the composition of the action, but the composition of the thought.** The most effective means for the realization of such a composition is the "association montage." The development and perfection of this method will make it possible to construct art-works along manifold thematic lines of highly varied material. To master this method completely, means to have attained the ideal of art-creation, whose task it is, as the old Dutch philosopher Hemsterguy put it, "to express the greatest number of ideas in the shortest time."

There is no doubt that the time-limitations of the film ("the shortest time") and our attempt, to give "the greatest number of ideas," are in accord with this teaching of the old Hollander. The nature of the film offers the pos-

sibility to solve this difficulty and for the other arts insoluble, task.

The two elements of this new film-language, association and brevity, justify the designation of this method as the **Method of "Associative Laconism."**

This conditioned expression (practically speaking, all expressions of art-theory are conditioned) offers the occasion to analyze the elements of filmic language from a particularly definite point of view.

Associative laconism affords, in my opinion, the possibility to establish in the work the line of development of the theme. This method makes it possible to control time and space more effectively through a successful composition of the abstract meaning; it facilitates the unification of highly varied types of visual material into a single, definite thought subordinated to the whole. It reduces the time of the action to a minimum. Association ultimately corresponds completely to the principle of the intellectual film, in which the subject-matter is subordinate to the intellectual reflex. If one takes into further consideration that poetic language, according to its own peculiar nature, is not composed of isolated grand thoughts, but frequently consists in intimations and allusions to definite ideas, then it becomes very clear that just this **associative laconism** constitutes its technically adequate means of expression.

Our films are therefore not constructed on the development of the external action, and do not depend on the external dynamic, but are based on the continuation of an intellectual thought-line.

The explanation for this lies in the circumstance that for us it is not possible to have a previously established continuity.

The final formation of our films occurs solely in the montage, in the cutting.

During the cutting, much—very much—is changed, this change often even depending on the substitution of some title for a very important picture. In fact, in such

films, the placement of the titles is as important as that of the images.

It is no accident that most of our best directors (Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, etc.) write their own manuscripts. The language of their manuscripts originates out of their extensive relationship, as directors, to the material and out of their extensive knowledge of the film-camera. Even in the films of Pudovkin the so-called "poetic spots" are incorporated by the director himself. It is also no accident that these directors have found fewer followers than the directors of the old theatrical "school," of which the outstanding representatives in Soviet Russia are Protozanov, Ozep and Room.

There is no doubt, however, that the transformation of the theme is likewise accompanied by a revision of the formal-stylistic disposition.

We must not only change the thematic contents of our works, but we must also seek new means of expression. Such a necessity impels us to constant change and experimentation; it permits of no stand-still, and it prevents us from creating still further art-works according to the old banal methods.

Our main task was to show the development of our country from a complete technical backwardness and lack of culture to our present-day colossal advancement, at the threshold of which we now stand. Our country is today seized with the enthusiasm of construction. The building of the Turkestan-Siberian Railroad is only one manifestation of this gigantic labor.

Not a single art-work that has its origin in the Soviet Union today is the metaphysical brain-child of an artist; but all art-works are based on material of actual occurrence, which forms the best foundation for any kind of creative work. Our central theme is the manifestation of socialism, the daily life of our Union.

All the imagination of our artists, all their inventive genius, can be applied to the wealth of material of our own lives. We need not ponder over subject-matter, for it can be found in every nook and corner of our Union, and we can therefore concentrate our full creative strength on the search for new and better means of expression. But these new methods for the construction of our film-works we seek only in order to reflect that which happens to us in reality, in as powerful and vital a way as possible.

We realize that in our work we are still a long way from perfection—more, that we stand just at the beginning of these new paths of the Soviet film.

We are technically still very weak and must daily seek and invent new art-means. Our cinema, artistically as well as technically, is still in its childhood days. Thus, we have just recently started to familiarize ourselves with the technique of the sound-film; but we know, we are convinced, that when we have once learned to master these new methods, we shall be able to create art-works which will deeply move the proletarian spectators of the entire world.

(Translated from the German by Christel Gang)

The development of art has at all times been closely related to the ideas and forms of life of the class ruling at a given time. In all former epochs which, with but few exceptions, made art the monopoly of the possessing and ruling class, those forms of art were encouraged which served to satisfy the higher, more refined individual requirements of the privileged. The satisfaction of the artistic needs of the masses was regarded as a subsidiary matter. Art was doled out to them in bad mass reproductions.

Things are different in the Soviet Union. There the masses are considered first. Consequently those arts which, in themselves, can benefit the masses, receive special encouragement. In the present stage of development these are the cinema and the wireless. They have long been recognized as extremely effective means for influencing the masses and giving them an artistic education—KURELLA —The Five-Year-Plan and The Cultural Revolution.

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PEPPER

EDWARD WESTON

EDWARD WESTON is an example of how America ignores first rate artists. It is more than fifteen years since Weston produced the first of his enormous volume of photographs, the majority of which have carried his name and the technique associated with his method, far around the world. But in the United States he is still known to an extremely limited number of people, chiefly, we believe, because the fundamental idea behind his conceptions and the unsweetened vitality of his results are too bold, and creatively too profound, for the type of American "mind" that "likes photography." Weston's photography is not what the average Hollywood movie-photographer would rate as "good": the quality of

his work is a permanent message to future proletarian technicians, both of the still and of the film camera, against the bourgeois "technique" of American photography that is even today, in spite of Soviet camera-accomplishments, a befuddled standard to a great part of the world. Here, in this man's work, the product of an honest eye, is no unhealthy artificialism of design, no back-lighting or cross-lighting, a complete absence of conventional technical sentimentalism, etc. . . .

Edward Weston's work represents the high-point of photography in the United States—its healthiest and most vital still-camera accomplishment.



STATEMENT

BY

EDWARD WESTON

1931—today—the tempo of life accelerated—with airplane and wireless as speed symbols—with senses quickened—minds cross-fertilized by intercommunication and teeming with fresh impulse.

Today—photography—with capacity to meet new demands, ready to record instantaneously—shutter co-ordinating with the vision of interest impulse—one's intuitive recognition of life, to record if desired, a thousand impressions in a thousand seconds, to stop a bullet's flight, or to slowly, surely, decisively expose for the very essence of the thing before the lens.

Recording the objective, the physical facts of things, through photography, does not preclude the communication in the finished work, of the primal, subjective motive. AN ABSTRACT IDEA CAN BE CONVEYED THROUGH EXACT REPRODUCTION: photography can be used as a means.

Authentic photography in no way imitates nor supplants paintings: but has its own approach and technical tradition. Photography must be,—Photographic. Only then has it intrinsic value, only then can its unique qualities be isolated, become important. Within bounds the medium is adequate, fresh, vital: without, it is imitative and ridiculous!

This is the approach: one must prevision and feel, BEFORE EXPOSURE, the finished print—complete in all its values, in every detail—when focusing upon the camera ground-glass. Then the shutter's release times for all time this image, this conception, never to be changed by after-thought, by subsequent manipulation. The creative force is released coincident with the shutter's release. There is no substitute for amazement felt, significance realized, at the TIME of EXPOSURE.

Developing and printing become but a careful carrying on of the original conception, so that the first print from a negative should be as fine as it will yield.

Life is a coherent whole: rocks, clouds, trees, shells, torsos, smokestacks, peppers are interrelated, interdependent parts of the whole. Rhythms from one, become symbols of all. The creative force in man feels and records these rhythms, these forms, with the medium most suitable to him—the individual—sensing the cause, the life within, the quintessence revealed directly without the subterfuge of impressionism, beyond the range of human consciousness, apart from the psychologically tangible.

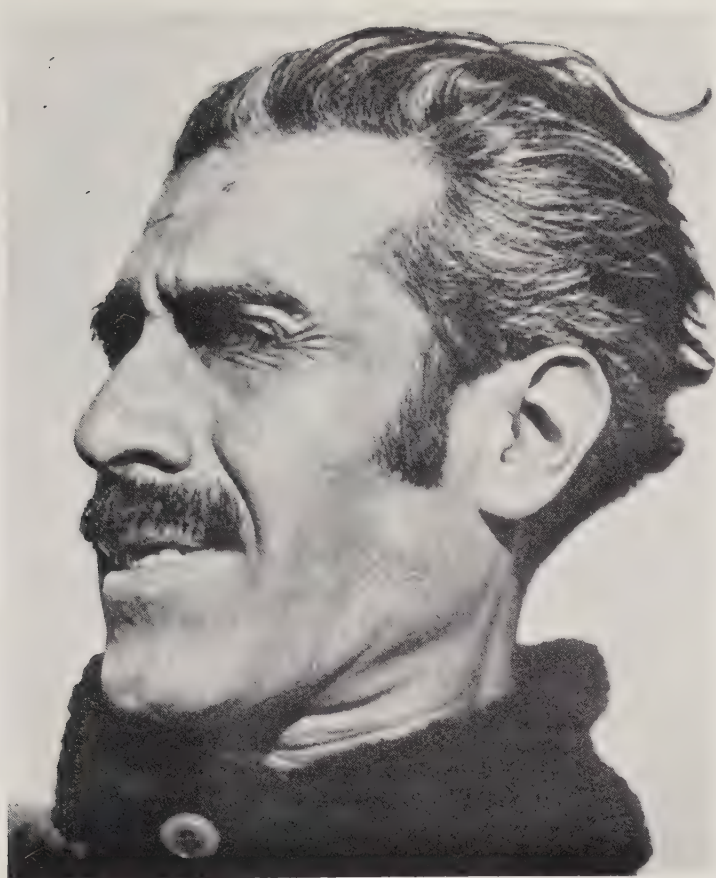
Not the mystery of fog nor the vagueness from smoked glasses, but the greater wonder of revelation,—seeing more clearly than the eyes see, so that a tree becomes more than an obvious tree.

Not fanciful interpretation,—the noting of superficial phase or transitory mood: but direct presentation of THINGS in THEMSELVES.

TECHNICAL REMARKS

These photographs,—excepting portraits—are contact prints from direct 8x10 negatives, made with a rectilinear lens costing \$5.00,—this mentioned because of previous remarks and questions. The portraits are enlarged from 3 1/4 x 4 1/2 Graflex negatives, the camera usually held in hands.

Edward Weston, Carmel, Cal.



EDWARD WESTON is an internationally known photographer who lives and carries on his main work in Carmel, California. After several years spent in Mexico, where he contacted his contemporaries in the field of painting, Orozco and Diego Rivera, Weston returned to the United States and produced a mass of photographs which have had revolutionary consequences in expanding the powers and developing the dynamic of the still-camera. Reproductions of four of his prints appear in the present issue. Weston's most noted work is in his groups of peppers, tree-roots and early industrial subjects.



KELP

SCENARIO and DIRECTION

by V. I. PUDOVKIN

IN response to a number of inquiries and requests, *Experimental Cinema* informs its readers that the Christel Gang translation of Pudovkin's book, **Film Direction and Film Manuscript**, the first half of which was published in the February and June, 1930, issues respectively, is the **first and only** translation of this work published in the United States. An English translation has been published in Great Britain, but this is not available on the American market. With this number, however, *Experimental Cinema* discontinues the serialization of Christel Gang's translation and prints instead a recent manuscript by Pudovkin dealing with present developments in his methodology. As Pudovkin himself makes clear in the course of this essay, the ideas formulated in his book, which was first published in the U.S.S.R. four years ago, are now obsolete when considered in relation to the rapid growth of Soviet film-technique. Its appearance was "unfortunate," to use Pudovkin's own word, in view of the radical advances and changes that Pudovkin himself has made in his entire method. There seems, therefore, to the editors of *Experimental Cinema*, no valid reason for continuing this outmoded work at the present stage of the evolution of the Soviet cinema.

THE EDITORS

READING for the first time a scenario by Alexander Rjechevsky, I experienced a sensation until then unknown to me.

While reading it, the scenario created the same emotion in me as a literary work. I say unknown sensation because, for reasons unexplained, the authors of scenarios always use, to express themselves, a style characterized by its platitude and banality. All scenarists seem to forget that the word is their only means means of expression; it is by means of the word that they must convey to the director the complex whole of their ideas and sensations which, on the other hand, the screen must convey to the spectator. The co-operation of the scenarist and director is very important. Until now this was partially realized by meetings, discussions, conversations, but as a rule, the author of a scenario, having sold his work to a firm, was from then on completely out of touch with actual production and grew indignant against the director who often distorted his work. The lack of coincidence of scenario and film can often be ascribed to the incompetence of a director, but is in most cases due to reciprocal misunderstanding. The erroneous propaganda which called for the writing of the scenario as a simple series of **frames**, has given unsatisfactory results. Four years ago I, unfortunately, took part in this campaign of "the idea thru the picture". It must be said that then scenarists were exclusively preoccupied with montage. The content of the film, its idea, its intentions, were all united in the theme. The director limited himself to taking care of the simplest descriptive montages: a departing train, a well mounted fire, were considered fair results.

Times have changed. The cinema has progressed. The cinema-creators of today know how to impart to an audience, by a series of montage, very complicated abstract notions. The domain of the motion picture is broadening. Its possibilities are increasing: that which some time ago seemed impossible of expression thru the film is today a tangible and clear reality wherefrom we draw our best productions. It would be astonishing, if, in view of such changes, the scenario writers, so closely linked with the realization of the film, were not to transform their technique. Many directors, however, write their own scenarios. They jot them down on **montage sheets**, simple scheme or technical plan of work for shooting. In such cases everything must be read between the lines.

- 1.—Paul's face.
- 2.—Fist.
- 3.—Ivan's face.
- 4.—Fist pounding table.
- 5.—Table collapses.
- 6.—Ivan's face, etc.

What about Ivan's face, what is this pounding fist, what happens to Ivan? Nothing is indicated . . . Everything is clear only to the director, who, briefly, telegraphically, determines the nature of the frames discovered and shot by himself . . . This telegraphic style has unfortunately been adopted by the authors of scenarios. To think only in pictures,—to do the work of the director, in other words, often leads the scenarist into blind alleys. He forgets that in his work, contrary to the purpose of the montage sheets, everything must be contained **in** the lines. The word is his instrument. He must master it to perfection; otherwise it is inevitable that his work be **inexactly** and **superficially** felt by the director.

Consequence: the interpretations of the theme are variable and the film loses all its value. In Rjechevsky, however, we have an interesting example of scenarios profoundly elaborated in their content. For instance:

Extract from "The 26 Communists of Baku:"

- The front.
- Against the spectator; completely against him, the inseparable wall of maddened machine-guns, crackling.
- Covered with blood a soldier of the red army meditates at length; at last he finds . . .
- He has something to say to the whites . . .
- He writes it down on paper. Then he plunges back into his long meditations; several times, a vague motion with his hand to better determine the specific weight of the first word with which he wishes to begin his speech. Mysteriously, he smiles, motions hopelessly with his hand and writes at last in best penmanship, large upon the paper. . .
- Bastards!

- The whites fall, one after another, in the ranks; thru the holes in their chutes, could be seen before one's self a stretch where the shells of the Reds were bursting; a tank, leaning on its side, in distress, called for help like a semaphore.
- In close-up, the Red trenches; a commander standing on the parapet howls something.
- Fear, dread . . . Over the parapet appear first the bayonets; then, congealed, heads, only the faces of Red soldiers, somber and lifeless that stare, straight ahead of them.
- Knocking like mad, the Red machine-guns prepare the attack; in close-up, an agonizing man lies, breathing with difficulty. Our soldier looks at him; he thinks, very moved; tears in his eyes, he continues his message to the whites . . .
- My land swells, and my heart, too, swells. . .
- In close-up, Red trenches and the Red chief howling on the parapet.
- Fear, dread . . . Over the parapet appear first the bayonets; then, congealed, heads, only the faces of Red soldiers, somber and lifeless, which stare straight ahead of them.
- Completely against the frightful wall where the Red soldiers are, our soldier who has just been wounded pins his message to the whites on a bayonet, and on the paper is written . . .
- At any rate, you shall be massacred. The Revolution wants to make victims of you . . .
- Farewell upon this good word!
- And in the smoke of the White's trench, faces stare; upon these faces fear appears when they see, black and red in the smoke, the line of Reds advancing to attack. . .
- At the edge of a naked precipice, under heavy clouds, over endless water,—a great river or perhaps blue sea—great shells bursting successively . . .
- A Russian izba was afire . . .

I concede that in this case the subtitles are of primordial importance. But we have in this scenario an example of verbal expression which attains very great intensity. There is no possible wavering; the director may do less well than the scenario, but he will not be able to do something absolutely "different". The words express too exact a picture; the director will have no occasion to become tied up.

The Soviet cinema as a whole attained its forms by searching for new themes which until then seemed inaccessible and were not accepted by the "representatives of art." Rjchevsky has the virtue, his aims being limited, to pose problems bravely before the director; he determines the emotional content and the sense of the film without determining the visual contours. At times he even does no more than to give the impulse; a very determined form would indeed only confuse the director by imposing upon him fixed visual contours instead of indicating sensations to be expressed, the sense of the work.

Extracts from a Scenario

- Beginning.
- A naked and majestic precipice. Upon this precipice, some pine or other of remarkable beauty. Nearby, (you know how they are) a Russian izba. Near the izba, over the precipice,

- the clouds are heavy, the wind tears, and here is the endless water, a great river or the blue sea, perhaps; here a man stands, congealed.
- The wind, the wind, the wind that blows across God's whole world . . .
- Here: we see, on this same precipice, near this same izba, under these heavy clouds, while the wind howls over the endless water, blue sea or great river, we see a man who
- Slowly
- with anguish
- frenzied
- his hands cupped around his mouth that his voice may carry
- a man who weeps, hiccoughs and speaks . . .
- he shouts, the man, desperately
- he howls . . .
- from an edge of the precipice
- above the immense water
- to the other shore
- and here, in close-up, horsemen rush forward. . .
- dash forth . . .
- then ride away . . .
- And to them the man slowly spoke, wept . . .
- And screamed
- As tho questioning them
- "The father is dying! He asks me what you have invented, you men? Can we foresee a new life? Or, like the father, will I too be afraid to live?"
- The water . . .
- On the other distant shore
- The horsemen stop suddenly;
- and an open-hearted guy
- who answers
- over the vast water
- toward the precipice, toward the man who questions; he howls, enthused and indignant . . .
- "You'll remain here!"
- Enthusiastic, indignant, our partisan, open-hearted fellow, howls . . .
- "It will be hard during the first hundred and twenty years . . .
- but after that, it will be easy!"
- then the man of the precipice goes towards the izba.
- disappears.
- here he is in the izba, near the father, an emaciated, bony muzhik, agonizing.
- the son speaks, he speaks at length about something, he relates something to his dying father . . . then he is silent.
- the old muzhik who is agonizing turns on his side. Stubborn, whimsical,—he says with simplicity:
- I will not die today!

Here the power of the words does not serve to indicate how, where and what is to be photographed; the word serves only to convey the emotion which will be felt by the spectator before the future montage. Rjchevsky who possesses the **Verb**, does not abandon his director to the free play and hazard of the camera's findings. What he **says** in the scenario presides over the work of the director. All the technical work of the director, all the ingenuity of the man who handles camera, film and scissors, must be directed towards preserving the general tendency and inte-

grality of the work, beginning with the very moment the latter passes from the word into purely cinematic composition.

Rjechevsky does not concern himself with foreshortenings, lengths, close-ups, or background; and, nevertheless, in reading, one feels the rhythm of the film. Forms, foreshortenings, lights, character and movements of the actors, —all this, without direct indication, is contained in the verbal composition. Moreover Rjechevsky demands ingenuity. The indication: "Perhaps blue sea": seems at first negative. (What, in fine, river or sea?); in reality there is herein contained a precise directive for research and for shooting. The breadth, the austerity and majesty of the river which is "perhaps a blue sea" cannot be translated by a simple shot of the Volga, from a bridge. A whole montage composition is here given, which includes change of light, change of camera-position, and perhaps even the incorporation of other material having no relation to water.

Rjechevsky, therefore, works truly in the spirit of our cinema: he possesses at the same time the sense of the word and the infallible scent of visual expression, common gift of film creators and those who understand the laws of cinegraphic composition.

Here, in the scenario of the "26 Communists of Baku", is the siege of the city by the Turks. The weakened Red soldiers and the population struggle madly to hold the city. The author of the scenario in a remarkable episode, shows the desperate struggle in striking fashion. A fire. The firemen and those helping them, work frantically. Above the burning house and in the street, shells are bursting, ripping open the fire hoses and killing and wounding the firemen; the shells howl, but the people stubbornly extinguish the conflagration. Thus Rjechevsky does not show us the trenches, the two opposing sides; he does not limit himself to showing, as is the custom, the bursting shell and its ravages. He sets down, point blank, a sharp picture; the strained struggle of the people, the same as those who are outside the city in the trenches, and he rains down the enemies' shells upon them. The water sprouting out of the punctured hoses grips the mind like the blood that would flow from the torn veins of a soldier. The people ever again dashing amid the flames to save the victims is a spectacle of a power sharper and more certain than any desperate attack imaginable.

The composition of the scenarist is interesting. In his latest works: *The Sixteenth*, *It is Said in the Mountains* and *The 26*, there is no composition of the theme in the ordinary sense of the word. His films do not aim to chronologically describe the fate of the characters. The scenario is divided into a series of episodic pictures connected only by the march of the **central idea** rather than by the dramatic development of situations.

With Rjechevsky, very often, a character appears only to provoke the spectators and then to disappear forever. At times, he is incorporated in the construction of an episode to underline emotion.

In *The 26* the Soviet votes for the intervention of the British. The bloody head of a Red soldier is seen rising in the smoke of a crackling machine-gun and shouting to his dying comrade:

—We are being betrayed somewhere, Petka!

In "Life is Beautiful" there is a story and characters whose fates interests the author. His stories are characterized by the fact that they are not complicated like those

of other scenarists who, to define their characters and convey abstract notions, create complicated entanglements which distort the cinegraphic realization of the film. Indeed, in order to define a character by placing his destiny in conflict with that of others and in order to do so in a naturalistic manner with the help of multiple occurrences in a chronological order, it is generally necessary to employ an enormous quantity of descriptive material. This surplus burden (**surcharge**) forcibly makes the director's tasks very superficial. He lacks time (the film being limited to 2000-2500 meters) to deepen his work.

The story of "Life is Beautiful" is very simple and the characters are few. No complicated detail which might in itself be the expression of any idea. A few encounters, well worked out in depth.

It is interesting to note that Rjechevsky's characters are always composed of **types**. His works are always saturated with the **pathetique**. His heroes do not require any preliminary characterizations, nurtured as they are with the true heroism of our times. To him, "fighter of the Red Army" is a word of enormous significance; this type, in long cloak, red star on his cap, must move the spectator with a **certain** emotion when he appears on the screen; the reflex must be clear as might be that of a French patriot at the sight of Napoleon's hat and gray coat.

Thus Rjechevsky treats types in his scenarios. In his conception, it is a matter of principle that the character who will be photographed must not "act a part," it is not by the skill of his "acting" that he must be able to suggest what he is or is not. Rjechevsky requires that the character appearing on the screen must by that fact alone, by his exterior whole, bound to the interior picture, incarnate in the mind of the spectator a well defined type. Alexander Rjechevsky is therefore one of our best scenarists. He has completely integrated himself in our epoch. His works have a very clear **tendency** which, refracted upon the creative level, transforms itself into a broad and profound sensation of our Soviet reality (**actualite**). His emphasis is not banal propaganda but true, moving greatness; it is, in my opinion, the image of the first splendid **elan** which swept our country in the days of civil war.

TO those of our readers who have been waiting months for the appearance of the third issue of **Experimental Cinema**, we desire to emphasize that **Experimental Cinema will continue to be published**. In this respect, we must state, that, contrary to our earlier advertising and cover-announcement, **Experimental Cinema** will not appear under the classification of a monthly magazine, but will be published **BY NUMBER**. This, however, will in no way affect subscriptions, past, present, or future. Subscribers will receive **TWELVE** issues of the magazine, exactly as if it were being published at twelve regular intervals in the course of a year. We are emphatic to state that this "number" policy is due chiefly to our great financial difficulties. We cannot appear with any regularity and at the same time put out the type of issue which we have taken as our standard, under the present severely strained and limited status of our finances.

If our readers in this country and abroad will cooperate with us to the extent of helping us build our sustaining fund, we shall be able to appear with greater regularity.

One Hour with Gilbert Seldes Is Too Much

THE clever sentimentality of Seldes is patent in every word he writes. He is always the infallible man of letters whether he is discoursing on the future of drink, the weather, Al Smith, love, communism or the prospects of cinema. His appalling glibness of manner appears to overcome all obstacles. The most dynamic force begins to lose its power when it comes up against his lukewarm, effortless pen. It is impossible to recognize the original substance after it has passed through his fine hands. Rock becomes as water when he says the word. All is illusion. Fancy is king, so let us exalt in kingly escape, is his password to the world around him.

His capacity in short for extracting and paralyzing the heart of a thing and leaving the shell for the reader to play with, is manifest in every sentence of the book before me on the Cinema,¹ a book, which as an expression of the Cinema year 1929 (which unreeled the work of Eisenstein, Vertov, Pudovkin, Dovjenko) leaves about as powerful an impression on the reader as a feather floating down the sides of a skyscraper on a cloudy day.

Thus, Seldes, in his casual approach to the Soviet film, takes care to exaggerate the most obvious defects of the films,—the hammer-vendome-palace episode from "New Babylon," or the omission of Trotzky from "Ten Days that Shook the World," etc., in order to substantiate in his own confused mind, the paltry notion that cinematic principle is one thing and social concept another. As though it is possible to experience the one without the other. As though it is faintly possible for even the most exacting cinematic competence to produce a film without involving some definite social point of view.

Seldes, however, is only interested in the cake and "disdains the dough that bakes it." While the Soviet film appears to content him emotionally, he cannot let go of his crusty individualism long enough to accept the intellectual or social basis of the Soviet film, a separation that makes for compromise, cowardice and dishonesty.

It is neither expected nor desired that Mr. Seldes accept the social basis of the Soviet film but it certainly is expected and desired of him that he make clear **what social basis** he does accept—in the Hollywood film. And his inability to clarify his ideas as to why he finds the Soviet film so emotionally satisfying and yet so intellectually dissatisfying, as well as his refusal to expose the hollowness of the American "social" film, betrays not only his blindness as a film critic but clearly reveals his deep social fascism as well.

Seldes deprecates the brutality while admiring the ingenuity of the drawbridge episode in "Ten Days," one of the most powerful incidents in the film. "As a symbol, he writes, "it was brutal and overworked and ineffective; as an image of the confusion, the terror, the emotional catastrophe of the ten revolutionary days, it was equally brutal and overworked, but it did not lack effect." It is obvious that the effect of the symbol was lost on the insipid Seldes. These were "Ten Days that Shook the World." What did Mr. Seldes expect, a milkshake? Why all this distrust and fear of "background" become foreground so characteristic of intellectuals of the calibre of Gilbert Seldes. What then are the problems of the day, if not the problems of the working masses, and in what films, in what

literature of the day are these problems presented so passionately, so dynamically, as in the Soviet film, or in Soviet literature, even in the least of them. Where is social responsibility to the masses so inexorably a part of creative effort, as it should be, as in the Soviet Union? Wherein lies the profound emptiness of Western art, if not in its lack of **social responsibility**, the lack of which makes an individualistic painter like Picasso, milk and water; the fullness of which endows a creator like Dovjenko with almost biblical spiritual integrity. "Seeds of Freedom," the Soviet film of Jewish struggle, may be weak cinematically, yet the basis of the film is so vitally concerned with certain problems of our time that the film breaks thru the screen and becomes as important as life. How much superior is a film of this kind to the cinematically competent but socially decadent film, "Patriot" of Ernst Lubitsch.

But by his own admission Mr. Seldes has never experienced the spiritual conversion of the Russian masses. Implicit in this admission is the feeling that he has never undergone much of any conversion, otherwise his pen would have absorbed the power such a conviction would lend it. Undoubtedly "Ten Days That Shook the World" is a pretty strong dose of medicine for the child who is "puzzled by the question where the light goes when it goes out" and who wonders "whether a tree falling in the depth of a forest makes a noise when there is no one by to hear." The emptiness of Seldes is not only uncontained; it is cumulative as well.

He objects to the propaganda of the Soviet film on the basis that it is crude and bitter and naive. In New Babylon "the action is accelerated during the triumph of the Communards, so that sewing machines run faster and the whole world grows suddenly lighthearted and happy." In "Mother" he quotes the prison-guard insect sequence. Both of these episodes to this reader are emotionally exhilarating to a high degree and logically developed in the film. Propaganda when it becomes exquisitely fused in the spirit, the tone of the film, is its own justification. And to say that the omission of Trotzky from "Ten Days" cancels a good deal of the character of the film is as baseless as citing the elimination of John Brown from "The Birth of a Nation" as an instance of silly American propaganda. The reality of the film is there.

If it is true, as Mr. Seldes suggests, that great men and great art can evolve out of Fascism as well as out of any other ism, where then, are the signs, the portents of greatness, or of immanent greatness in Fascism? We would like to experience the moral fervor of a fascist film or the warmth of fascist fellowship. Where can one find such ecstasy? In "The Crowd," in the Italian film "Kiff Tebi?" Where the root is dead you cannot expect fulfillment of the flower.

To superpose "montage" on the American or European film today without a corresponding change in the social basis of the film will not make films any better or any worse than they already are. It is like giving the sun-cure to an incurable consumptive in order to give his body some semblance to the flush of life.

Seldes's book ends as though Eisenstein, Pudovkin, or Dovjenko had never existed. Only Chaplin, the quicksand in which Seldes is continually refreshing his sense of won-

der and escape, emerges out of the thin air, a winged, tragic figure.

"The moving picture is an illusion," writes Seldes and he bases his entire esthetic of the film on the potentialities of this statement. It is no wonder then that he has failed to understand the meaning or realize the possibilities of "montage" since to him it is merely a trick, an illusion. And it

is no wonder then since he has apparently embraced social-facism, that he has failed to penetrate the Soviet film in both its cinematic and social implications. One hour with Mr. Seldes is too much—much too much.

1. "An Hour with the Movies and Talkies"—Gilbert Seldes: Lippincott, Philadelphia—\$1.00.

DAVID PLATT.



"Fragment of
an Empire"

TURK-SIB AND THE SOVIET FACT

by J. LENGYEL

"TURK-SIB" initiates a new stage of film-development.

It is the step from the film-play to film-reality. From a finished picture of reconstructed reality to the reality of fact and deed. "Turk-Sib" has predecessors. Every educational film, every travel film, is in a way a predecessor, just as all films contain a larger or smaller kernel of reality.

In this case, however, the quantity of reality becomes an artistic quality.

"Turk-Sib" is a stretch of railroad built to make available the wealth of cotton of Turkestan for the industries of the Soviet Republic and the wealth of timber and grain of Siberia for the industries of Turkestan. The specific

reason lies much deeper. Even in capitalist countries, railroads, giant ships, airplanes and gigantic works are being built. But that alone is not a satisfactory reason for dramatizing them, for art demands the motivation of it. Art when it shows the bloody nudity of birth must also show the cause. A strategic railroad which is constructed in one of the capitalist countries for the purpose of transporting human beings like cattle, or a railroad which is built in a capitalist country to squeeze out from the sweat of the workers fat dividends for the stockholders—is, when one shows it through the camera lens, a bloody miscarriage of a despised and murderous system. But human greatness gives to the machine-epos, "Turk-Sib", the necessary purpose and goal of this colossal work. Its greatness lies in the fact that to the question "Why?" "What Purpose?" the answer is given: "Here is socialist construction in practice." The socialist construction is the creative-moral factor, of which this deed, the construction of the railroad, imparts to established reality, the sense, the strength and the enthusiasm of the film.

The picture reminds us that the world-bourgeoisie realize with bitterness that they are being confronted with a territory where they have nothing more to say. It is the territory of the world's first socialist construction, evidenced in the will of man and machine welded together in the act of creating a new world. In this case, the Russians' own version of one of the important manifestations of the 5-Year Plan in the world-scheme of things, was called TURK-SIB. . . .

"Turk-Sib 1931! Turk-Sib 31! Turk-Sib 31" . . . According to the Five-Year Plan, "Turk-Sib must be completed in the summer of 1931". But by the time it reached the German screen, it was called "Turk-Sib 1930". For Turk-Sib has been finished in 1930, and not only, as we for a short time believed, in the Fall, but already in May of this past year. What lies between Turk-Sib 31 and Turk-Sib 30 is called "socialist competition", which must not be confused with cut-throat, capitalist competition. What we see with ecstatic eyes is the unchecked, increasing speed of the Soviet working-mass, which is leading humanity, to use the words of Friedrich Engels, "out of the realm of necessity, into the realm of freedom."

The film-art of the Soviet Union has traveled only one way, the way in which the reality of Communist accomplishment was reflected. In spite of the short span of time, many important periods have been traversed, the enumeration of which does not seem superfluous to us.

The first period "Polikuschka" and "Aelita." Two films, outwardly fundamentally different, and still not without inner connection. "Polikuschka", which was based on a novel by Tolstoi, deals with a poor, good muzhik with trembling soul. Here one looks backward, deeply, into the past, into the Russia that is rapidly disappearing, body and soul. In "Aelita", a Utopian film, one deals with men of the future and inhabitants of Mars. Films of this category look forward to the fantastic future, amusing but not scientific or ideologically founded.

The second period yielded unforgettable creations. It begins with "The Armored Cruiser Prince Potemkin." To this group belong also the remarkable films "Ten Days That Shook the World" and "The End of St. Petersburg", and also "Mother" and the anti-imperialist film "Storm Over Asia." Here, historical reality was reconstructed. The reflected reality of these film-creations possesses a

passion and a natural integrity that gives it the value of a deed, or a revolutionary occasion, of the present day.

Then follows a group—narrow in its historical subject-matter but great in its true-to-life quality—representing the life of the individual. Problems arose from the new order of things, problems which are still in discussion since the great Revolution of 1917. The film "Bed and Sofa" (sometimes known as "Three In a Basement") by Alexander Room, and a number of other films, which unfortunately were not shown in Germany attacked the problems which arise when out of the ruins of the older order of things a new life is in the course of creation.

The next step is "Turk-Sib". A forerunner of "Turk-Sib" was Eisenstein's "Old and New", which had for a theme socialist construction in the field of agriculture. However, this film does not sustain itself without artificialism. Other predecessors of "Turk-Sib" were the films "Pamir", "Afghanistan", "descriptive" films such as "A Trip through the Soviet Union" and the culture films in general. These educational films are all closer related to "Turk-Sib" than the kino-eye films of Vertov, where there is a very strong sense of being but a very meager sense of self-consciousness.

New problems always arise in individual life. The growth of socialist society offers such manifold problems that art can never cease creating. Inasmuch as these problems were a part of the reality of their time, they will remain works of art for the future. Let us recall "Potemkin". An artistic, deeply felt reality here connects with strong roots into the life of the individual. The role of a work of art is not ended when a new work of art of the time appears. When there are close ties established with the basic social structure of life, the work of art remains and outlives new art-works when the new are untrue and unreal.

The director of the film "Turk-Sib" is Victor Turin. If we mention him only now after we have just asserted that the directing in "Turk-Sib" was the work of the spirit of socialist construction, we believe that in this way we do honor to Turin in the highest degree. By this he is "promoted" from being the director of a great film to the status of an important member of a great deed, and he is considered on a level with the workers who in the icy cold of Siberia and in the torrid heat of Turkestan are occupied with the greatest human deeds in the world today.

"Turk-Sib" flashes on the screens of the world. But already film-technique has taken a step forward. The talking, sound and colored film of America is a technical advancement. However, in the Soviet Union, the first very promising attempts are already being made. Technical improvements cannot be a hindrance to an advancing social class in spite of the fact that the technical facilities are still numerically greater in the hands of the opponent. Very soon the sound film will signify a further gain for the Soviet kino. The civilization of the bourgeoisie has still some of its plundered riches to show. But withered, weak and demoralized as it is, it has nothing to say. Wait until the Soviet sound film shall sound! That will be the real beginning of the new, valuable, world-important sound film! The time is not far off now; one can await it with patience. The Soviet sound film will keep the promise which the Soviet silent film made. . . . Time and fate are working for the advancing proletariat.

(Translated by Eleonore Erb)

HOLLYWOOD BULLETIN

FOUR MORE SOVIET FILMS IN HOLLYWOOD

OUTSIDE of increased unemployment, a large number of starvation-suicides and an \$8,000,000 bank-robbery, the only events of genuine significance that have occurred in the American film-capital since the last issue of *Experimental Cinema* (June, 1930) are the successive, although widely separated, showings of four Soviet films. These four productions: *Old and New*, *Turk-Sib*, *A Fragment of an Empire* and *China Express*, were enthusiastically received. As in the case of the preceding eight Soviet showings in Hollywood (see *Hollywood Bulletin* in E. C. of June, 1930), the most whole-hearted and intelligent reception came from the lay public; the most confused, befuddled and downright stupid reactions from the film-industry—that is, from the so-called “professionals” and “technicians,” the job-holders. *Old and New*, because it had been publicized and talked about for a long time previous (under the former title of *The General Line*), and also because its screening at the Filmarte coincided with the heralded arrival of Eisenstein in Hollywood, drew the largest crowds of any of these four pictures, but it was by no means the most popular nor the best understood.

Judging by the personal reactions of individuals contacted, we should say that *Fragment of an Empire* was the most extensively admired and that *China Express* was next. *Turk-Sib* elicited applause mainly from the type of native boobery that sees “propaganda” the moment a capitalist is portrayed as a rattlesnake or a death’s-head. *Turk-Sib* had none of the sheer communist ecstasy of *Old and New*, none of the passion and bitterness of Ermler’s *Fragment* and certainly none of the violence of the younger Trauberg’s melodrama, *China Express*. This last picture aroused the most vehement bursts of applause (except for a single sequence in *Fragment*, which surpassed it in this respect) of any Filmarte picture since the showing of *Ten Days* many months ago. *Turk-Sib* is what is always taken as a “purely cultural” film, i.e., a film which, important enough in itself, makes no indictment of slavery-systems and modestly contents itself with landscapes, railroad engineering and triumphs over Nature. *Turk-Sib* is culture, but *Old and New*, incorporating a reel or two on the ruthlessness and greed of the kulaks, is not “culture,” and as to *Fragment of an Empire*—it had a sequence in which a bewildered peasant demanded to know who was running the new society of Russia and the answer given was a panorama of the workers and peasants of the Communist Republic, a sure indication that Ermler’s picture was not “culture” but “propaganda.” Nevertheless, it was this picture that made the greatest impression in Hollywood and on the largest number of individuals. “It’s propaganda,” they said, “but marvelous stuff anyway.” Even the cameramen this time forgot to insist that they had “done this sort of thing ten years ago.” It was surprising to find as many as two photographers who voluntarily stated that the battle-field scenes in *Fragment of an Empire*, which, you may remember, were taken in solid darkness broken only by a long searchlight following a fleeing soldier across the screen, should have been thought of in connection with a certain recent war-picture. This was an almost “revolutionary” advance over the arrogance and inferiority kick-up that characterized the film-colony’s reactions to the earlier Soviet films shown here.

EISENSTEIN IN MEXICO

It will be better to pass over the hectic “career” of Eisenstein in Hollywood. We had originally planned, and had advertised to that effect, to give our readers a detailed account of what Eisenstein’s life was like in the American film-capital. We wanted to print a graphic description of his reception here, his “home-life,” as the American bourgeoisie always say, his troubles, the endless “stalling,” the rejection of story after story, either by himself or by the company, each taking its turn at this game. We wanted to have a good laugh with our readers at the hypocrisy and sycophancy of certain trade journals which adulated the man to the heavens during the initial period of his “lionization” but which suddenly changed their tone into one of cheap sneering and domestic whitewashing as soon as Eisenstein was definitely dropped from the company that had engaged him . . . It is best, however, not to touch these sores. We must, for various reasons, modestly content ourselves with a half-hearted desire to be a bit merciful to the industry that could find no place for the Russian’s genius and not one dollar out of its millions for a picture under his direction. The picture that Eisenstein brings with him from Mexico will no doubt make history enough for our Hollywood-ridden Western hemisphere.

Shortly after his severance with the company, Eisenstein was privately financed by individuals who had previously admired his work. His backers are in no way connected with the film-industry. Eisenstein is in Mexico now, working in the third or fourth month on an original project. The film Eisenstein is making in Mexico is non-political. He is producing a film on the life of an old Mexican tribe.

The recent “trouble” he encountered there while “shooting” some Mexican peasants’ hovels was more complicated than, but not half so drastic as, the outside world believed. There have been whispers from individuals who are “in” on the project about a “mysterious” telegram from a certain official headquarter in Hollywood. You can judge for yourself whose slimy hands have been spoiling the pie. But meantime Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse continue to make their film. This production out of the heart of Mexico will have sound. It will be the first important film to come from that wonderful land to the South.

Certain Americans have found Mexico a good place for oil-wells, but have never thought of it for films, except of a luridly slanderous type. Eisenstein, on the other hand, finds much down there that is important and magnificent.

By all the indications, his film should be equally as important.

FLAHERTY GOES TO RUSSIA

Ten years of waiting. Eight years of polite “stalling” from the Rockefeller Institute—interested, oh so interested in the “advancement” of “culture” (culture officially interpreted, of course). Years and years of crushed efforts in Hollywood. Trying to speak the language of barbarians and not succeeding. Five years of wasted energy trying to raise \$25,000 to film the culture and customs of a fast-dying tribe of American Indians. And now Robert Flaherty, the director of *Nanook of the North* (financed by a fur-company because of its advertising value) and of

Moana of the South Seas (mutilated by the producers before release), is enroute to the USSR, the Free Workers' Republic, to discuss with the Sovkino Corporation a film, or possibly a number of films, to be made by him on the tribes of Soviet Central Asia. Flaherty will attempt in these films to provide European Russia, as well as the world at large, with a clear and exact understanding of the economic organization of the Tartar and Mongolian tribes that constitute the bulwark of the Soviet Union in Asiatic Russia. A Soviet **Nanook** or **Moana** should have enormous value, in building socialism among these tribes. Sovkino couldn't have picked a better man for this job than Flaherty. The film he makes there should considerably expand the distribution of the Soviet product: it should have access to places where the dramatic films, because of fancied political "reasons," are not permitted.



ALEXANDROV AND CHARLIE CHAPLIN IN A ROW BOAT OFF CATALINA ISLAND, CALIFORNIA. Photo by Eisenstein.

On a Theory of "Sources"

by SAMUEL BRODY

ELIE FAURE presented us with a useful term when he invented the word "cinemetaphysics." In recent years there have arisen enterprising young cinema enthusiasts in a number of countries to whose writings and activities Faure's learned term applies to perfection. All these groups and individuals may be designated as "cinemetaphysicians," the word meaning those who, having emerged from some field—usually the literary—wherein they have failed to capture laurels, seek to heap upon the comparatively virgin field of the movie a sort of high-sounding witchcraft with awes the uninitiated and nauseates the wise.

It is the belief that Mr. Potamkin has taken his place in the ranks of this tendency that prompts me to write this article.

For well over a year he has consistently expounded in **Close-Up** a theory of "sources," which has so far remained unchallenged. The deeply fallacious implications of this theory, or method, the originality of which its author is so proud, became alarmingly apparent when, commenting upon Vidor's **Hallelujah** in an article entitled "The Aframerican Cinema," he developed the thesis that a study of African origins is indispensable for a correct filmic portrayal of the American Negro.

" . . . I want one (a Negro) as rich as the Negroes in Poirier's documents of Africa. I am not interested primarily in verbal humor, in clowning nor in sociology. (Emphasis mine—S.B.) I want cinema and I want cinema at its source. To be at its source, cinema must get at the **source of its contents**. The Negro is plastically interesting when he is most negroid. In films he will be plastically interesting only when the makers of the films know thoroughly the treatment of the Negro structure in the African plastic, when they know of the treatment of his movements in the ritual dances, like the dance of the circumcision, the Ganza. . . "

I might begin by asking Mr. Potamkin since when he has learned to dispense with sociology in his cinema, when only a few months ago, in an article published in **Monde** entitled "Cinema Americain," he wrote.

"De tous les films américains, c'est le film comique qui a eu le plus grand développement. Ce phénomène est du surtout à l'impulsion donnée par un étranger, Charles Chaplin. La contribution de Charlot aux films américains a été de deux ordres: l'expression ou stylisation contrôlée, **et la référence sociale ou satire.**" (Emphasis mine—S.B.)

Think of it! The "social reference" is here considered as one of the two main factors in the films of Chaplin, who Potamkin believes is largely responsible for the "tremendous development" of the American comedy.

Further in the same article, its author recommends as a "source" for the present-day American cinema, Sidney Drew, an early comedian "who introduced the satire of servants of the petty-bourgeoisie into the American movies."* And again: "'Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,' a broad and marvelous satire on the high American bourgeoisie. . . (!)" Potamkin points out in that same article that in order to perfect the "essence of its themes" the American cinema must refer back to its early history which he claims is replete with sociologically significant subjects. (What are "sociologically significant subjects," Mr. Potamkin?)

Even if the source theory be conceded, why this ardent clamor for reference to the sociological film as an American source and at the same time the assertion "I am not interested primarily in . . . sociology," when possible sources for Negro cinema are considered? Am I to accept this as a new brand of **discrimination**?

I want Potamkin to inform me how he would go about the matter of making a film on the American Negro without consideration for the socio-political motive that underlies every phase of Negro life in the United States. Mind you, I am not asking for a thesis, but consider the work of the Russians whose praise he has sung so loudly. There

is great cinema because there is real insight into its **only important source**, the dialectic movements of the social organism and its motor: the class struggle.

If it is Negro plastic he is after, and that only, (are you not diving headlong into the polluted waters of "art-for-art's-sake," Potamkin?) then Potamkin is deeply mistaken when he asks for a study of "Negro structure in the African plastic . . ." **Capitalist America has created a new Negro who in virtue of his position in the American social structure is as far removed from his African origin as his so-called "white-nordic superiors" are from theirs.** Read Prof. Reuter's essay on the subject, and you will learn that even in the sphere of plastic we have nothing to find at the African source. No, Mr. Potamkin, we "are" **not** "always what we were;" this is a vulgar and unscientific concept. The Negro of 1930 is **not** (even physiologically, take note!) what he was in 1870. In sixty years the black population of the United States has become so transformed that official figures place one third of its total in the mulatto group. The ratio of this transformation is at the present time so great that within fifty years Potamkin's "Wooly, tall, broad-nosed and deep-voiced" Negro may be somewhat of a rarity in America. The assimilative process goes on despite the fact that the American ruling-class is segregating the Negro worker and pitting his white class brother against him. The inescapable fact that a white bourgeoisie exploits **both** the Negro and white worker is the determinant.** **The class issue governs above everything else.**

The almost complete metamorphosis of the Negro on American soil in a comparatively short historical period is the most instructive and essential feature to consider in any approach of the problem. While an investigation of origins can have great value both historically and in this case also anthropologically, it cannot, in the instance of the American Negro, bring us one step closer to the revelation of the laws that govern the history of the black man in capitalist America. "Aframerican" is obviously a fallacy.

The conception of "sources" in this case can only lead us back to the O'Nellian philosophy so slickly expounded in **The Emperor Jones** that even Potamkin, by his own admission, was able to swallow it whole. "We are always what we were." **Emperor Jones** says as much: Only a thin veneer separates the American Negro from his African origin (read "source"), and under primitive conditions he will revert to the fears, hysteria and superstitions of his tribal forefathers.

How strange these fairy-tales must seem to the Negroes in the steel-mills of Pittsburgh, the packing-houses of Chicago, and the coalpits of Pennsylvania! Hollywood would rather go back to all the "sources" in the world than film the real American Negro. Any documentary film on the life of the American Negro would pack more tragedy per foot of negative than a thousand falsehoods like **Hallelujah!** But Hollywood is the monster-filter of capitalism thru which is sifted American reality, and that is why we cannot expect it to give us the truth about Black America in its films.

Giovannitti's lines come to my mind:

I call you to the bar of the dawn to give witness if
this is not what they do in America when they
wake up men at midnight to hang them until
they're dead.

The Negro on the screen! What a vision! I want to

take Potamkin by the hand and lead him to the hell-holes of Georgia and Alabama where "they wake up men at midnight to hang them until they're dead" . . . I want to guide him thru the slums of Harlem where black babes die by the score in pest-infested tenements. I want to show him the **twelve million** that King Vidor will never dare to approach. Let him then speak to me of "sources," and the "dance of the circumcision" . . .

The whole recent discovery of the Negro in art bears the imprint of Potamkin's "source" ideology. The discovery was made by **respectable** whites who do not understand the modern American Negro and who beneath their worship of spirituals, jazz and African sculpture, hide a deeply traditional class contempt for him.

Van Vechten in literature, Covarrubias in art, and now Vidor in the film! Never mind the **yaller** girl. Let us even forget the cast recruited in cabarets to interpret Southern cotton-pickers, and the "Negro" songs composed by Irving Berlin. Has not Vidor told us about "the remarkable emotional nature of the Negro?" What is this atavistic color that permeates the entire film, if not a vulgar "source" philosophy? Remember for a moment the fraudulent baptismal scene, the stagey and exaggerated revival meeting, the emphasis on the hysterical and the primitive in every move of the characters.

Hallelujah! is bad cinema because its director attempted to substitute the white bourgeois lie about the Negro's mystico-religious and hysterical nature for the proletarian reality of the Negro as a doubly exploited member of the American working-class. Neither the most thorough study of Poirier's films nor the closest scrutiny of African primitive art forms could have helped Mr. Vidor to give us a better document than what he has offered us in **Hallelujah!** The result might have been a more pretentious but hardly a better film.

Sociological implications can never be avoided, no matter how esthetically disinterested either a novel, a play or a film may be. Viewed in this light **Hallelujah!** is as spurious as **Abie's Irish Rose**. Unless one is working with purely abstract forms, this cannot be escaped. The construction of any concrete theme in art in which human material is involved strictly implies the drawing up of definite social relationships as a prerequisite.

Obviously, all this is very elementary. But Mr. Potamkin has skipped over these basic considerations into an impossible position where an esthetically abstracted Negro essence in the film has become the thing for him. And that is the reason why, in one of his perennial quarrels with Gilbert Seldes, after two pages of trifling on technicalities, it was only in passing that he found it necessary to mention . . . "the thematic false-rendering in the narration" of **Hallelujah!**

If we investigate Potamkin's application of the source theory to the Jew in the film, we find the same serious fallacy repeated. " . . . the importance of the Jewish physiognomy, like the Negro, an unexploited cinema plastic material, the singularity of the intensive Jewish gestures, and most outstanding, the Yiddish and Hebrew utterances as the material of the sonal film."

In the case of the Jew, Potamkin has been a little less specific and also a little less analytical of the matter. Try to go back to Jewish "sources" and you get as a result a most colorful mixture of almost every "source" in the world. May I again take the liberty to refer H. A. P. to a **scientific** source? Read the investigation by Karl Kautsky entitled, **Are the Jews A Race?** and you will discover that

the modern Jew is even further from his sources than the American Negro. The Jew-type that you have in mind is vanishing from the earth even faster than the "wooly, broad-nosed Negro" is disappearing from the American scene. Kautsky has pushed his research so far as to prove conclusively that even the legendary Jewish proboscis is now only a memory. Rather sad for the Jewish-plastic enthusiasts, but a fact nevertheless.

A very interesting point: In his article on the Jew as movie-subject, Mr. Potamkin makes mention of almost every Yiddish film ever produced. Every gone-and-forgotten attempt is brought up to find its place in the scheme of the investigation. **Not a single word is mentioned about the film, which, its technical shortcomings notwithstanding, is in every respect the greatest one on the Jew ever made.** I have in mind the Soviet production entitled *Seeds of Freedom*. It is a film in which is portrayed the struggle of the younger Russian-Jewish generation against the conservative background of Yiddish orthodoxy. It is a dramatization of the birth of a new Jew who is beginning to shed the fetters of all his "sources" to merge with his advanced (revolutionary) class surroundings. In Hirsch Lekker, the hero, we see symbolized the emergence of the Jewish worker who is being remade by his social milieu.

And I know that Potamkin has seen *Seeds of Freedom*. . .

The consideration of cinematic plastic by no means becomes a minor one simply because a prototype at the "source" cannot serve our purpose. On the contrary, new structures, new gestures, new atmospheres, new forms beckon the real artist.

Unlike Mr. McPherson, editor of *Close-Up*, I am of the opinion that the cinema needs **more** and not **less** theory. But let us learn to distinguish between correct theory and the eclectic humbug which results from attempts to be original at all costs. Excluding isolated and individual contributions of value to the theory and esthetics of the cinema, we may safely say that only the Russians have created a scientific system in theory which has fully proven its value in practice. This theory must be deepened and enriched with our further investigations and experiences in the cinematic field, but the creator of misleading theoretical concepts is as criminal as "the geographer who would draw up false maps for navigators." The mental gymnastics of the French bourgeois cinema esthetes gall me as much as pragmatic America's contempt for all theory. More clarity and less confusion! Less phrases and more science!

In the last year there has become noticeable a change of heart in their former attitude towards the Russian film on the part of many bourgeois intellectual cinema circles throughout the world. Some are complaining of "too much theory." A French bourgeois critic, formerly friendly to Russian films, recently wrote about his weariness of the Soviet kino. Another French *cinéaste* has spoken of his disgust while emphasizing what he terms "the falsehood of the Russians." (Rene Clair). The French cinema world actively boycotted Eisenstein during his stay in Paris. And, in America—

Potamkin has already said: "I do not think the Russian kino has as yet found a method that suits its profound material. . . . The Russian films had better find a new method. . . ."****

This was said by one who only a short time ago devoted whole articles in praise of the "old method." And take note of the almost threatening "had better." I think I

can detect more sincerity in Seldes's "technical trick" formulation.

I'll wait and see . . .

Paris, March 1930.

*On this point a young Hollywood critic has the following to say: "Potamkin's mention of an insignificant bourgeois actor, forgotten today even by his former admirers, Sidney Drew, is an attestation that is typical of Potamkin's writings of the last year. Who was Drew, anyway? A thousand others also satirized the servants of the petty-bourgeoisie. This type of light, gay, chuckling satire is of no more significance to the type of satire that the servants of the bourgeoisie require of film-creators than the humor of Will Rogers is like the humor of a cartoon in the "Daily Worker." It is affections of this nature that make Potamkin's writings sterile, sophisticated to the point of nauseous glibness . . . He is so anxious to show that he knows every Tom, Dick and Harry that ever appeared before a camera or that ever ground out a six-reel piece of kitsch, that he misses the vital essence of his material."

** This does not mean, of course, that the Negro is not faced with special problems within the working class—problems which necessitate new means of combat as part of the proletariat's broader revolutionary struggle. Lynching, for instance, is obviously a part of the oppression of Negroes as a race.

There is a bourgeois school of thought that denies the existence of a "Negro problem" on the ground that assimilation will eventually eliminate the Negro from the American social scene. This is a reactionary evasion of a sore in the capitalist system.

The fact that the Negro is **changing** thru assimilation does not mean that he is not **now** the most exploited member of the American working class.

Both the "source" theory and that of "eventual assimilation" are therefore reactionary.

The object of this article is to show that in dealing with the Negro as subject-matter for the film, Potamkin has merely reversed an old bourgeois "idea" into another just as counter-revolutionary. Instead of evading the issue by claiming a "natural" solution in some distant future, he has escaped to Africa. Between these two theories, the oppressed American Negro worker remains suspended in mid-air between his past and his future.

****New Masses*—New York, December 1929.

"What renders the influence of the motion picture extraordinarily powerful is the fact that it acts on, and thru, one's feelings; in other words, in order to be in the right, the film needs no reasoning. A story with nothing in it, provided it causes deep emotion, will succeed in modifying the conception of life as seen by a young girl or the man in the street, much more effectively than a very solid argument might succeed in doing.

"Realizing this power of the cinema as a means of persuasion, the Church could not regard the cinema as a negligible quantity. Being responsible for faith and morals, the Church owed it to its mission to direct attention to this new invention, just as it had given its attention to printing from its first appearance. It cannot remain indifferent to anything that acts upon conscience. Catholics must, therefore, in so far as they are worthy of this name, turn their attention and their activities to the problem of the cinema, and at once.

"So important is the part that the cinema already plays in our society that further delay in dealing with it would be fraught with serious consequences."

CANON JOSEPH REYMOND
(Director of the International Catholic
Office of the Cinema.)

Page Father Edmund Walsh, of Georgetown University, who, before one of the Fish meetings, for the first time revealed to a horrified world that the Soviet Union made use of the film for propaganda purposes!

VIDOR and EVASION

by B. G. BRAVER-MANN

FROM the point of view of King Vidor the functions of a film director are analogous to those of a journalist in that both report what they see, the difference between them being that the film director reports what he sees by means of camera lenses and the film strip. However, like the reporter, what the film director reveals depends upon **how** as well as upon **what** he sees. His perceptions may be so limited that he never sees what is significant. Let us see how Vidor has applied his theory in practice.

Vidor sought to deal with the late imperialist war in **The Big Parade** because he thought no one had properly reported it. He followed this film by efforts to report in **The Crowd** the experience of a white collar robot in an American metropolis, and in **Hallelujah** the life of the Southern negro. **Billy the Kid** offered an unusual opportunity for interpreting the life of the frontier. Each one of these films in construction and ideology shows that Vidor fails to see his subject matter in relation to experience.

Perhaps his mental attitude towards reality and nature may be illustrated at the outset here by this incident: Recently Laurence Stallings went to Vidor with a scenario for a picture. The first half of this scenario, entitled **The Big Ditch**, is a glorified account of how the late General Goe-

thals and his men fought yellow fever during the construction of the Panama Canal. A provision was made in the scenario script to show the close-up of an inoculation-needle being thrust into a man's arm. Vidor objected to this close-up on the score of a purely personal dislike for the scene. This is typical of his attitude towards fundamental facts.

Visually and structurally, the well-built motion picture is the **intensive objectification of subjective experience**. Moreover, it must be that if it is to succeed as cinema. In any form of imaginative art the ultimate expression must be a union of the inner experience of the artist with outward reality. This is axiomatic particularly of the cinema, the most direct of the arts. If a director is timorous about facts or does not know how to approach his subject matter so that the spectator will feel the subjective phase of action and experience, his detached attitude towards his material will result in a film incomplete or spurious in structure, scenes, implausible in meaning, and image-patterns inexpressive of visual and plastic values. This is the approach of Vidor, as of nearly all other film practitioners in American Cinema—nor it is an approach that can altogether be ascribed to the limitations of film producers.

Vidor, like many of Hollywood's film practitioners,



GLORIES OF WAR

From *Fragment of an Empire*

not only reveals a feeble conception of experience in his films but also one that shows an unawareness of the visual and plastic values of an action, of an object, because of his inability to relate internal and external experience. In a world grappling with the problems of unemployment, hunger and capitalist exploitation, the American cinema offers films like *Hallelujah* and *Billy the Kid*. It is to Vidor's credit, however, that unlike other directors in the American cinema, he sought to apply certain structural methods that would have helped him if his philosophy of life were different. By using the structural devices best suited to intensify the emotional content of an idea through concentration upon the plastic and visual values of an object, Vidor only succeeds in increasing the flabbiness of an already flabby approach to his material. In *Billy the Kid* he misused the detail-close-up—the most intensive visual expression of the film—by filling the screen with the hand of an unimportant character holding a hand-puzzle to suggest comedy relief, when he might have used a detail-close-up of Mrs. McSween's eyes revealing her anger at the rebuff she received from Col. Dudley. It explains why Vidor and many American directors do not know when to use the close-up, and accounts for much of the general disapproval of meaningless close-ups, as employed in Hollywood film practice, on the part of critics and spectators. Since Vidor's approach to his material is one of evading experience and of rendering incomplete statement it is clear why he uses the methods of a groper when directing his players on the set, why he depends upon trial-and-error methods, and leans entirely upon the reactions of his players rather than to elicit from them an expression that is consistent with the emotional content required by a scene or an image.

Vidor's idea of reporting the late war seemed to center upon introducing a French girl in *The Big Parade* as a symbol of sex appeal winding its way in and out of a long line of motor trucks loaded with men to bid adieu to her departing Yankee lover. Vidor reported the war so well in *The Big Parade* that the notion prevailed in Europe that Americans believe they alone had fought and won the war; that they alone had not known the experience of defeat; that only they had battled their way through the German trenches. Compare the comedy relief scenes of Americans larking about in Paris cafes and jesting in the trenches, with the stark scenes in *The End of St. Petersburg* and in the German film *Behind the German Lines*, whose titles were changed so as to glorify the war before the film would be shown in American film houses. Vidor did not feel intensely about war as did Barbusse the Frenchman; Latzko, the Hungarian and Pudovkin, the Russian. Many Americans who saw service behind the trenches looked upon *The Big Parade* as a visual presentation reminiscent of the good times they had in Paris.

If *The Big Parade* had been a report of the war according to Vidor's assumptions, it would have sent spectators home with a hatred of militarism and of the forces that inveigled us into the war. But Vidor centered his comment upon the war in an absurd love affair between a French peasant girl and an American doughboy while men were being blown to bits. He omitted entirely any reference to the financiers and dollar-a-year men who were amassing fortunes. *The Big Parade* followed the beat of drums, and wove a halo around flag-waving and woman-hunting instead of breeding a great hatred of war and a profound pity for the millions of war's victims. No wonder that Eisenstein pronounced *The Big Parade* as war propaganda. The chief

technical virtue in *The Big Parade* was its powerful visual percussion in the movement of men, men, men, and trucks, trucks, trucks, and the tension in which this movement broke at the parting of the two lovers. Otherwise, it was entirely negligible as a film.

The Crowd is Vidor's best effort. And what a poor thing it is in the final analysis! If Vidor were more of the artist and analytical thinker in matters involving social and personal relationships, this film might well have become a challenge to our cheer leaders and to those of Hollywood's production minds whose ideas of subject matter for the films are limited to the presentation of false sex emotion, prize fights, underworld life and comedy relief.

The failure of *The Crowd* is Vidor's failure to analyze and visualize reality. It supplies producers with the argument that the artistic film cannot succeed, whereas *The Crowd* did not succeed because it dealt unconvincingly with experience.

In *The Crowd* Vidor had a great theme—about an average unskilled white collar slave, wishfully believing in the certainty of the lucky break, his marriage on the winnings of a prize won in an advertising contest, the two children resulting from this helter-skelter union, the pittance of his weekly wage, the loss of his job, the animosity of a wife's lower middle class brothers, the stylized movement of the white collar robots in a large office. Although Vidor demonstrated an adept use of the moving camera, the film visualized none of the social commentaries that would have made this a great crowd picture. *The Crowd* lacked the structural treatment to make it significant as cinema. If he had possessed a greater appreciation of the plastic and visual basis of the cinema, Vidor might have given to the image-content of his scenes some of the ecstatic quality of film-poetry born of deep social convictions. Everything in *The Crowd* dealt with externals already obvious and familiar to every film spectator. Externals predominated because Vidor is, after all, a groping, shallow-minded reporter instead of an artist, a film-poet, an interpreter of experience. That is why he gave us only the surface aspects of the crowd in its Coney Island mood, its shopping expeditions, its gulping of sandwiches and pop, its deadly uniformity. Vidor neglected to show to the spectator in the film-house that as a mass the crowd might exercise the collective will to shape its own destiny. *The Crowd* left the spectator in the film house resigned to the acceptance of defeat and futility. It offered no catharsis—no emotional release to the spectator in terms of experience.

Hallelujah revealed the conventional viewpoint about the Southern negro, picturing him according to the lowest estimate held him by the white man, a singer of spirituals, a patron of cheap dives, a petty gambler, a fanatical revivalist. A film artist with a penetrative social outlook would have built from this material a great motion picture based upon the aspirations of the negro worker to cope with his environment in the South. Why does Vidor insist on constructing films that pretend to deal with vital social themes when his own social viewpoint and understanding of reality are so utterly bourgeois and so extremely limited? Granted that he may wish to avoid the puerilities of Hollywood, he is like a man setting out on a journey to an unknown destination and after traveling for a brief distance decides he can reach his goal by running around in circles. Vidor must know that structurally there is nothing significant about *Hallelujah*. At best it is glorified vaudeville, with the addition of a few silent scenes.

In *Billy the Kid* Vidor is at his feeblest. It is not to be wondered at, that its producers needed the assistance of seventy-nine year old Thomas Edison's name to ballyhoo the film. It was heralded as the first wide-screen film. More novelty. If the wide-screen proves anything at all, it proves that novelty cannot take the place of well-organized film structure nor of expressive images that fill the rectangle of the screen, regardless of whether the screen be standard, double or triple standard in size, round or any other shape. Some theorists have indulged in much-ado about the wide screen. Inexpressive images in the wide screen simply mean that they are several times the size they would be on the standard screen. Consequently they are several times worse as images. Some years ago, Karl Grune made a German film called *Waterloo*. It was built around the life of Bluecher and the defeat of Napoleon. In this film there were a number of sequences in which the standard screen was split into upper and lower rectangles, upper and lower triangles and in oblong areas side by side. In each of these arcas were simultaneously and effectively shown the parallel actions of scenes of widely separated locales. The material in *Billy the Kid* was replete with possibilities for a similar powerful montage of parallel action of images appearing at the same time, in divisions of the screen. But Vidor had not the necessary creative vision to perceive this.

Excellent opportunities were missed to develop sound images¹ in counterpoint to visualize images of scenes in parallel action. For instance, when in *Billy the Kid* Mrs. McSween returned from a fruitless interview with Co. Dudley, she sat down at her piano while the shooting and the flames raged about her. The flames were reflected in the surfaces of the piano as she played "The Star Spangled Banner" and the strains wafted over the town. Alongside the scene of Mrs. McSween playing, there could have been a scene of the town as it lay in the canyon. Then, following, another scene taken from a different angle could have shown Mrs. McSween playing the anthem and in the area alongside that scene, flashes of the townsmen and of their frightened faces as they sat in their homes listening to the sounds of the music and of the shooting; flashes of the faces of the hired gunmen in the Murphy camp, of Col. Dudley in his tent, his men and cannon. By this montage on a split screen, a powerful tension could have been built up all the time that "The Star Spangled Banner" was being played. That, however, would have been too much within the realm of vital experience.

As subject matter the *Saga of Billy the Kid*, if treated without evasion, should have made an epic film of the Southwest during its transition period from the pioneer stage to the beginnings of centralized control in the cattle business. Its material and characters were admirably adapted to the scope of an analytical, image-minded director, for the real drama was built around two strong characters, Murphy and McSween, who staged one of the bloodiest cattle wars of the Southwest. There is irony, too, in the circumstance that Murphy had studied for the priesthood and McSween for the ministry. In this bitter conflict, which is known to have dominated life in Lincoln County, New Mexico, during the seventies, *Billy the Kid* was merely an incident, just one more among the numerous desperadoes in the most lawless section of the Southwest. Historical and social values of the material were eliminated to feature a conscienceless young gunman—an evasion of experience that made the Kid incredible as a character and mere a comic opera outlaw. Players should always be in-

struments for the director, but in this film, Vidor, like the rest of his fellow practitioners in Hollywood, makes no use of the film's structural elements to build up that biting characterization which could make this period in American history live for the spectator. There is no emphasis upon Murphy and McSween, on the drama in the economic and social aspects of their conflict; and the important character of Col. Dudley is omitted. Yet, any film purporting to deal historically and truthfully with the early West must show the amazing activities of the officers of the army in those days. If American film producers and directors insist upon evasion in the treatment of historical facts, we need never expect to have any authentic historical films.

In *Billy the Kid* it is clear that if Vidor knew how to **intensively objectify subjective experience** through the visual, plastic and structural means of the film, he might have built a remarkable motion picture. But one cannot interpret the subjective without relating it to outward experience. The evasion of experience on one hand and the inability to cope with the structural demands of the motion picture on the other, has made Hollywood the laughing stock of the world among those who understand the film's possibilities and necessities. Evasion of experience, combined with limitations in creative ability explain the insipidity of the American film and the reasons for its diminishing hold upon the film-going public in America and in Europe. In view of the facts, it's just a swell joke that Vidor and other Hollywood film "regisseurs" continue to be called our "first" directors!

Had Vidor ever deserved the rank of a "first" director, he would not have issued this condescending statement on the little film theatres of France.

"The foreign producers are more courageous and are making more headway than in the past. This progress, however, has not been from a solid foundation of sound production methods as was the development of the film industry in America . . . There are any number of "little theater" movements to be encountered, and it is in these houses that the unique productions being made abroad are to be found. I saw one in which the entire story was told in close-ups,² a daring experiment that is admirable in effort, but scarcely to be considered anything more than a very well done novelty . . . These pioneering steps are laudable and hold much promise. They are interesting and worthy of attempt but as earnest competition to American films they are woefully lacking . . . They are more intent it seems, upon a cinematic fishing expedition that might net them something worthwhile, but in all probability will be quite unproductive."

Instead of using his name to give publicity to the efforts of the trail blazers and experimenters in the European film movement, so that American audiences and producers might develop a strong impetus in this direction, Vidor did precisely what other American practitioners have done: i.e., he dwelt upon the "superiority" of American films. If directors whose names may mean something to the film public fail to use their influence with that public towards the establishment of a film-art, how can the spectator, unaided, arrive at these conclusions himself? Had Vidor looked upon the work of the film experimenters of Europe with the eyes of an analyst and an artist, he would have discerned that they are intent upon relegating all film practices smacking of the conventional film, that the

efforts of European as well as of American film experimenters are certain to doom the false film practices of Hollywood. Had the production methods of American film studios been as sound as Vidor claimed, he would not have been among the few American directors in 1928 who publicly criticised the panicky flight to dialog films. With all the millions at their disposal American producers and directors can point to but a few accidental pictures that contain at the most touches of intrinsic merit in film structure. However, they may live to learn that the "cinematic

fishing expeditions" of proletarian film groups in Europe and America will inevitably produce a film revolution that will force American producers to return to the cloak and suit business whence they came.

1 There was no need for sound in this film. None of the scenes were helped by sound or dialogue. Reference to sound images is made here only because sound happened to be used.

2 Ostensibly, Vidor had in mind Dreyer's *Joan of Arc*, the sharpness of whose patterns he tried to emulate in several scenes in *Billy the Kid*. The statement quoted appeared in *Closeup*, Oct. 1928.

Principles of the New World-Cinema

by SEYMOUR STERN

PART II. The Film as Microcosmos

Section stressing the cinema as a new instrument of human consciousness. As the form of that consciousness itself.

REVOLUTIONARY film doctrine emphasizes the cinema as the instrument of perception and domination of labor-philosophy and world-meaning: as an instrument which has the power to hammer incessantly on certain **dominants**.² In the psychological sphere (analyzing forms, manifestations, motivations, reflexes, etc. of behavior), it has the power to expose the subtle **overtones** and nuances of outstanding types of a **class**—for example, the dinosaur, the millionaire, the "virtuous," self righteous middle-class girl, the "humanist" liberal, the American business-man, etc. . . . In respect of these qualities, the cinema, to the spectator, has the character and function of a **scalpel**. But the film-creator simply and scientifically accepts it as the instrument of **selecting, organizing, (co-ordinating, associating, etc.) the dominant psychic qualities and external characteristics** and significant **overtones** (singly and as interpenetrating image-complexes) of the individual, both as an individual and as the manifestation of an entire **type or group**.

Indisputably, the nature of the cinema is **microcosmos**. This term is advanced unreservedly. I bring to the attention and consideration of the American prolet-kino Lenin's vigorously defined conception of the cinema as "the microcosmos of proletarian reality." That is why Lenin repeatedly urged the "natural or non-fictive film"—an injunction out of which later developed the wonderful Soviet news-reel and Vertov's films of the "kino-cye". They were taken "on the spot"—(events, accidents, etc.) However, they have not proved emotionally half so moving or even so convincing, as the deliberately fictive dramatic works of Pudovkin, although this is an incidental point.

The significance of the cinema as microcosmos is great. The cinema is the most powerful instrument devised by mankind for the expression, in highly concentrated form, of the dialectic world-struggle of the classes.

No other means or agency of expression has one-tenth the power of the cinema for creating a consciousness (visual and auditory) of the dialectics of world-history in proper time and space perspective.

The cinema has the unequalled capacity to present people with not only the perspective, but also the relative di-

mensions, of all previous, world-historical struggles of the exploited class against the power-class, and to present these perspectives and dimensions in montage of film time and film-space, a microcosmos-concentration of world dialectics. Such is the significance of the cinema as microcosmos!

By power of montage!

By power of time-and-space concentrations and associations!

Take the cinema Leninistically as the **microcosmos** of world-dialectics. To use an image: It can best be characterized as an **inexhaustible field of action-energy**, in which the montage-dynamic operates like a tractor ploughing the field of a Russian "collective," an inexhaustible field of **effects** and of **changes** (dynamics, motion-variations, etc.) . . . Montage-philosophy is the **dialectic** of this cinematic **action-energy**.

Synthetic montage is the central "switching station" of the "mechanism of domination" . . . The possibilities of cinematic plasticity and relativity are endless . . .

The character of the film as microcosmos is the most important creative-esthetic consideration of the present century. A wholly new, radical approach to creativeness is being based in Soviet Russia on this dominant consideration. It is a deeper and more startling challenge to Western bourgeois civilization (to its philosophies, its notions of behavior, its misconceptions of human relationships, etc.) than even the most violently antagonistic doctrines of Marxist-Leninist economics. With its advancement, all bourgeois conceptions of esthetics and creativity are being forever swept away . . .

The character of the film as microcosmos necessitates a new creator: the **scientist-artist laborer**,—the Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko artist type. More than that the completely **dialectic-minded thinker**. Thus, the present revolution in cinematography, which successfully stamps out the **disease** of Hollywood, marks the beginning of the joining, in cinematography, of **radical-revolutionary esthetic philosophy** with **radical-revolutionary science** towards the attainment of an **ultimate exposition of radical-revolutionary world-meaning**.

And it is historically inevitable that in the future, in the coming Proletarian World-State, no esthetic science, no conception of creativeness, will be possible or will bear within itself the potentiality of fruition, unless it be rooted



From ARSENAL

in **dialectic materialism**,—in a fully apprehended **materialistic** interpretation of life, history and humanity.

The character of the film as microcosmos forces a consideration of the **relativity-association of dominant images as the technique for the establishment of radical, dominant image-ideas**, which in themselves hold the key to the philosophy of the film. This consideration may be non-categorically stated: **Out of the conjunction of two images, the third image, THE RADICAL IMAGE-IDEA (mental), emerges. Out of the conjunction (in montage) of many image-elements, is created the synthesis of which the final-definitive radical image is the essence.**

The art of defining and creating image-ideas, the art of hammering image-ideas into the mentality of the spectator by the persistent ingenious manipulation of aggressive, violently emotional montage-forms, can be said to be largely dependent on the genius of creating synthetic images which embrace the cardinal philosophical points of the underlying image-idea.

Before going into the question of synthetic imagery, I would like to stress one important, if somewhat incidental point. For the eventual success of this type of cinematography—the cinema based on entirely revolutionized radical conceptions of esthetics and structure, that not only successfully defies the bourgeois weaknesses of all past esthetics and all “classically enshrined” notions of art, but even indicates how absurd these notions are in their relation to absurd forms of society—for this cinema, it is absolutely essential to have films of **passion**. The passionate film, that is to say, the film of overcharged emotional intensity, violent, incisive, psychologically surprising and **sustained**, can alone give adequate expression to the peculiar form of

action-energy that characterizes the cinema. Already we have films geared up to a high degree of emotional intensity: **Potemkin** (particularly in the massacre-episode), **The End of St. Petersburg**, (particularly where the worker-hero, in a frenzy of rage, hurls Lebedoff, the munitions-capitalist, to the floor), **China Express**, **Storm Over Asia**, **The New Babylon**, the explosive **Ten Days That Shook The World** and the bitterly vehement **Arsenal**. The film of vehemence depends on the skillful manipulation of aggressive, penetrating montage-methods to achieve the maximum possible intensification and release of emotional energy in the spectator. **The part played here by the principles of the conditioned reflex, as an instrument of emotional agitation, is of course colossal.** One the purely esthetic side, the simplest and most striking time and space and movement forms have proved useful (through the aid of photographers such as Tisse, Golovnia, etc.) to heighten the excitement of the content and the cutting. In these respects, the Russian films, from Eisenstein's **Strike** to Pudovkin's **Storm Over Asia**, which are based on deeply thought-out principles of agitation and visceral-motor excitation, are not a consummation, but only a beginning.

The film of passion is the only film which has a right to be considered a social film; that is, a **passionate** expression of the **dialectics** of historical world-processes. It is the only **type** of film than can adequately meet the demands of mass emotional necessities of the present century.

At the opposite end is the sickly-sweet emasculation and degenerate sentimentalism of the Hollywood “entertainment” film (including, perhaps more than anything, the so-called “dramatic” films of Hollywood), based on a gross and perverted falsification of the vital facts of human exist-

ence. But the anti-social tendencies of the Hollywood film exemplify a complete antithesis to what the vehement film of visceral-motor excitation should try to achieve.

Even the subtle film, that deals with complicated social conditions without the revolution-dominant as a basis of its imagery, even this film can possess a kind of **intensive vehemence**, mounted in the overtone implications of gross social and economic inequalities. Passion, as the final degree of intensity of montage-violence, of explosiveness, should be the standard "temperature" of the social film. With regard to its seriousness, the "temperature" of the social film,—its "heat" and the vehemence of its expression of the underlying image-idea—should be a constant irradiation, a constant discharge of the kinetic energy of its fast-moving images. And the films enjoyed by the "escapists" and "esthetes" of the Western world, films of "release" and "escape", praised to the skies by such people as J. G. Fletcher, G. Seldes, Rotha & Co. and other intellectual hoodlums, have of course no place whatever in the mass-cinema of the Proletarian Revolution.

As regards the philosophical end or "purpose" of the image-play of radical-revolutionary cinematography, this end, the image-philosophy of the image-whole, is expressed in the outstanding synthetic images themselves. The montage-methods of analysis (differentiation and objectification) and of synthesis (integration, association, etc.) are likewise the methods used in the construction of such synthetic images to endow them with the broadest variations and possibilities, as key-words of film language.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS TO SYNTHETIC IMAGERY

A number of elementary considerations must be advanced prior to discussing synthetic imagery. Several of these were already stated in categorical form (see *Principles of the New World Cinema, Part I*, especially section on *Principles of the Image-Idea*). Although previously mentioned, however, they can be accepted here as a fresh phase of the montage of image-relationships.

1. Every film based on a correct montage-form is the expression of its dominant, radical image-idea. In this connection, it can be added that the persistence with which the film-creator builds up and significantly defines (through the film) the dominant, radical image-idea basically underlying the film, determines the degree of esthetic integrity and the spiritual-intellectual strength of the film.

The definition of montage (Part I, *Principles of the New World Cinema*) as "THE COMPLETION OF THE IMAGE-IDEA THROUGH THE FILM IN VISUAL AND DYNAMIC FORM," is valid for this aspect of montage-ideology and cannot be too strongly insisted upon.

2. The sum and substance of Eisenstein overtone conceptions can be expressed in the terminology of the present dialectic as follows: The image-idea (of the sequence, of the episode, etc.) is as much the mathematical resultant of overtone cumulations arising out of the conflict between the single images themselves (which collectively form the image-idea) as it is the product of these images in a purely montage sense.

3. In the same sense, taking the ultimate impression of the film from the point of view of the spectator (the receiving brain), the radical dominant image-idea underlying the film is the mathematical

resultant of the sum total of the overtone cumulations of all the images of the film, as well as it is the product of the image-ideas of the sequences, episodes, etc.

4. Every image of the film has the possibility of realizing its significance in the total image-structure in three ways:

(a) As a purely descriptive agent, illustrating an event. In other words, as a unit in the development of a continuity of action (of any happening whatsoever, actual or imaginary);

(b) As the symbol of the deeper image-idea that is expressed by the descriptive action, of which this particular image is a part (the symbol). Or, in conjunction with this same possibility, the image may be used (recurrently) as the symbol of any other action whatsoever to which its relationship is purely and definitely symbolical and not a continuity-relationship in the sense of immediate joining to preceding and succeeding montage-pieces.

(c) Because of its dual employment, both as description and as symbol, each image has the possibility of being, besides the symbol of an image-idea, the fundamental root-image of this idea.

Obviously, in the most advanced types of cinema, the majority of images operate simultaneously in both a descriptive and a symbolical capacity. This is the richest, fullest and most startling method of expression now at the disposal of cinematography.

In connection with the above resume of the possibilities of the ways in which images can be utilized, consider the following fragment of an original continuity, which illustrates many of the points of this essay:

SECTION OF A CONTINUITY (CONDENSED)

(Note: Owing to lack of space, the complete montage cannot be rendered in the following continuity. Only the most important elements, illustrating the principle of root-images and association, are presented.)

SCENE: A park. A square. A street-car line. Steps leading up to the main entrance of a twenty or thirty-story skyscraper—the City Hall. A church.

SITUATION: Crowds. Working masses, working-class sympathizers, by-standers, business-men, "saintly" priests, jeerers . . . Agitators on soap-boxes. Cossack police on proud horse. Workers with banners, slogans, etc., etc. Hired thugs, plainclothesmen, etc., paired off with foot-cops. A street-car held up by the crowd. A street-cleaner shoveling gutter-garbage on a street opposite the park. Chief of Police and staff watching from the steps of the City Hall. The Chief is tailored in stylish, immaculate plain clothes. The police attack on workers begins.

SYNTHETIC ROOT-IMAGE:

1. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT OF Chief of Police on steps. Composition-grouping of Chief and several surrounding members of the staff in uniform and heavily armed. The Chief gives a direction to those standing about him. They hurry off, out of frame. The Chief stands alone—glowing with the pride of a general.

CAMERA-FOCUS SHARPENS INTENSELY ON HIS FIGURE.
CAMERA PANS UP FROM HIS FIGURE TO THE SKYSCRAPER BEHIND HIM.
CAMERA FOCUSES ON TOP OF SKYSCRAPER AT EXTREME ANGLE PERSPECTIVE.

(Focus-timing here in accord with finally worked-out montage-tempo.)

CAMERA PANS DOWN FROM TOP OF SKYSCRAPER TO ORIGINAL ANGLE ON CHIEF OF POLICE.

2. CUT TO CLOSE-UP OF mounted Cossack-police. (Taken from below). A burly cop. He raises his mob-stick and brings it down. (CUT ON THE MOVEMENT).

3. CUT TO CLOSE-UP OF an undersized Jewish worker. (Taken from above, opposite angle.) He starts to run. (MOVEMENT ON THE CUT). The mob-stick descends crushingly on his head. (Note movement—association of shots 2 and 3, establishing rhythm-graph of entire episode).

4. CLOSE SHOT OF a modishly attired "modern" priest with a "sweet and saintly" face, standing in the projected shadow of a cross before a church-building. He crosses himself and pronounces a "blessing" . . . (MOVEMENT ON THE CUT).

5. Men, women and boys with banners running en masse towards sidewalk. The throngs of spectators on the curb form a solid wall.

6. MOVING CAMERA SHOT of small group of workers with banners, running. The shadow of a mounted policeman races over them.

7. MEDIUM RANGE SHOT OF crowd of onlookers, mostly American business-type. They wear straw hats. They are neatly dressed. They have cynical and contemptuous sneers on their faces.

8. CLOSER SHOT OF same group. A young enterprising business-man, characteristic of his class, makes a "wise-crack" to his companion. Then he cups his hands, as if at a baseball game, and calls out at a passing cop (not visible in this take) . . .

TITLE: "Kill the damned Reds, Mike!"

9. CLOSE UP OF the business-man taking his hands from his mouth and grinning good-humoredly" . . . FLASH CUT.

10. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT OF cop ("Mike") running past. He half-turns, as he hears his friend call. Laughs: a brutal, ruthlessly sadistic physiognomy. Waves his mob-stick. Runs on . . .

11. MOVING CAMERA SHOT (taken from above) OF group of workers with banners, placards and papers. Running. The shadow of the mounted policeman deepens over the crowd, with which it races in pace. PAN CUT.

12. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF a woman, screaming.

13. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF the woman, hurled to the gutter.

14. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF the hoofs of a police-horse, prancing on the fallen woman's body.

15. ANGLE CLOSE-UP OF mounted cop's face, bending low into lens. He curses and yanks his horse into frame.

16. MEDIUM CLOSE-UP (horizontal plane) OF a worker mixing with a group behind the prancing horse . . . He sees . . . and starts . . . He stands stock-still, frozen with horror!

17. ANGLE SHOT (extreme perspective) OF police-horse, TAKEN FROM BELOW (the woman's viewpoint), rising on the two hind-legs . . . The fore-legs rise before the camera and tower above it . . . The horse attempts a momentary balance on his hind-legs, and then . . . The fore-legs suddenly come down. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

18. CUT IN ASSOCIATION CLOSE-UP OF the body of the unconscious woman, as the fore-legs of the horse pitch upon her. MOVEMENT ON THE CUT. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

19. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT OF the worker. He yells. Out of his pocket he jerks a piece of lead-pipe and hurls it with all his might at the mounted Cossack-police.

20. CLOSE SHOT OF mounted Cossack, from behind. The hurled chunk of lead strikes him at the base of the neck. Jumping, he wheels about in his saddle . . .

*21. IDEATIONAL SYNTHETIC GROUP:

(a) The mounted cop tottering in his saddle and falling. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

(b) FLASH CLOSE-UP OF Police Chief yelling in dismay. (Special effect close-up).

(c) "TRICK" SHOT OF the City Hall building appearing to sway, tremble and fall . . .

(d) The mounted cop fallen to the street.

22. COMPOSITION-GROUP OF four mounted police wheeling their horses about in regimented movement. Into action!

23. PARALLEL CAMERA-MOVEMENT (taken from slight angle above) OF the worker fleeing across the square. In a frenzy of haste . . . Pushing man, woman and child out of his way . . . Pushing through groups and crowds . . . Breaking into the crowd on the curb. (HORIZONTAL AND ZIG-ZAG MOVEMENT-LINES).

24. FLASH SHOT OF the four mounted police sweeping fiercely across the square.

25. CLOSE SHOT OF two burly cops manhandling protesting worker near a fire-pump. A closely packed crowd forms a close semicircle on the side-walk.

26. CLOSE UP OF the brutal face of one policeman.

27. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT OF the scuffle. Suddenly with a quick, clever move, one of the cops, stepping back and "ducking" low, trips the fighting worker, who starts to sprawl and topple backward. The worker's loss of balance is completed and his fall to the pavement is

made a "knock-out" by a well-delivered blow in the face from the other cop.

28. CLOSE UP OF the horrified and indignant face of typical American "liberal". The liberal cries out sharply:

TITLE: "Shame! Shame! You bullies! Such needless brutality! Why don't you employ decent methods?"

29. FLASH CLOSE UP OF the indignant face of the liberal.

30. The worker sinks in a heap before the lens. The cops bend down and start to lift him OUT OF FRAME.

31. HEAD-ON MOVEMENT SHOT OF the worker who threw the piece of lead pipe, racing INTO CAMERA. The four pursuing mounted cops THUNDERING FAST ON HIS HEELS! The fleeing worker runs close into immediate focus-foreground and then swerves suddenly to one side, OUT OF FRAME.
CUT ON THE MOVEMENT .

32. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT OF street-car conductor and motorman on motorman's platform, consulting. The motorman manifests his impatience. The conductor gestures to "go ahead", and walks back into the car. The motorman puts on his big white glove and turns to the switch.

33. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF fare-register of street-car . . . A fare is registered.

34. SHARP CLOSE-UP. A mob-stick brutally crashes a worker's head. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

35. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF fare-register. Another fare is registered.

36. SHARP CLOSE-UP. A mob-stick crushes another worker's head. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

37. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF fare-register. Another fare is registered.

38. SHARP CLOSE-UP. A police fist smashes a worker's face. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

39. SHARP CLOSE-UP OF fare-register. Another fare is registered.

40. SHARP CLOSE-UP. A police club is brought crushingly down on another worker's head. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

41. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF fare register. Another fare is registered.

42. SHARP CLOSE-UP. A mob-stick across a worker's face. FLASH CUT.

43. FLASH CLOSE-UP OF fare-register. Another fare is registered.

44. A fist savagely wields a mob-stick. FLASH CUT.

45. IDEATIONAL CUT-IN GROUP:
(a) ANALYTICAL MONTAGE-FLASHES OF the register clicking successive fare.
(b) FLASH CLOSE SHOT OF priest radiating blessings and fatherly love . . .

(c) FLASH CLOSE-SHOT OF Police Chief on City Hall steps, his hand to his brow, like a sunshield.

(d) PERSPECTIVE EFFECT SHOT OF City Hall building (Tentative suggestion: camera movement montage).

(e) CLOSE-UP OF fare-register, registering at greatly accelerated speed. Faster . . . faster . . .

(f) Water flooding into a street sewer.

46. CLOSE-UP OF the motorman's foot, stamping the bell . . .

47. CLOSE-UP OF the motorman's hand slowly beginning to turn the motorman's switch.

48. DIAGONAL ANGLE SHOT OF one of the four mounted police suddenly checking his horse before the camera.
(MOVEMENT ON THE CUT).
Levelling his revolver, he fires.

49. ANALYTICAL CUT-IN: FLASH CLOSE-UP OF the fare-register.
Another fare is registered.
MOVEMENT ON THE CUT. CUT ON THE MOVEMENT.

50. CLOSE-UP (from above) of the track-fender of the street-car, in slow movement. The body of the shot worker pitches on to the fender, sprawled across it. His arm and head lie at the edge, almost on the track. His eyes stare upward into the down-looking lens . . .

51. ANALYTICAL CUT-IN OF ROOT-IMAGE:
The Chief of Police on the steps before the City Hall building.
CAMERA PANS QUICKLY UP ON STRUCTURE, TO TOP. CUT.

52. ANGLE SHOT OF motorman. (Taken from fender, looking up).
He gestures excitedly with his gloved hand, and yells to the dead worker to get himself off the fender.

53. MEDIUM SHOT OF one of the four mounted police, motioning violently to the motorman. He brings his horse close to the car.

TITLE: "Ride that body out of the district! About three blocks down!"

54. MEDIUM CLOSE-UP OF the motorman. Nods to the cop and salutes in a friendly way.

55. CLOSE-UP OF the motorman's switch, the gloved hand turns . . .

56. VERTICAL ANGLE SHOT (looking down from motorman's window) OF the dead worker stretched out on the car-fender. The fender in movement.

57. "FLANK" SHOT OF the front of the car with four mounted police riding parallel on either side.

58. CLOSE SHOT OF the wheels of the street-car, legs and feet dashing parallel. As the car gains in movement, the CAMERA, MOVING PARALLEL, slightly widens its focus and gets in a mass of feet, legs and finally (in full view) parallel-running bodies—men, women and children.

59. ANGLE CLOSE-UP OF the fender, (taken from opposite side), bearing the dead worker.

60. FROM BEHIND THE MOTORMAN'S WINDOW:

Yelling, threatening, angry workers rush in a huge mass **up** the track, and from all sides and streets in the near distance, in an increasing throng, **into** the advancing street-car.

61. FROM TRACK-LEVEL: (At a distance) The advancing street-car with the dead body. Like a gigantic Machine-Moloch.

62. CLOSE-UP OF the motorman's switch, being pushed to the "full" pole.

63. Squadron of mounted police marching horse horizontally, in a flank movement into the mass of advancing workers . . .

64. A street-cleaner pushing his shovel along the curb.

65. CLOSE-UP OF street-cleaner's shovel. CAMERA MOVING PARALLEL.

66. CLOSE-UP OF street-car fender with dead worker.

67. COMPOSITION-PERSPECTIVE SHOT OF regimented line of mounted police sweeping into mass and clearing the track.

68. CLOSE-UP OF the street-cleaner's shovel sweeping up the refuse along the curb-line. **Faster.**

69. CLOSE-UP OF motorman's switch, at the "full" pole.

70. CLOSE-UP OF street-car fender, faster . . .

71.—72.—73.—etc . . . Acceleration, image-exaggeration, etc. of the foregoing, reinforced by timed recurrence of the dominant root-images, etc., until the total montage-structure reaches its synthetic static point, namely: PERSPECTIVE-COMPOSITION IMAGE OF the City Hall tower, with the figure of the Police Chief standing small and solitary on the steps. The shadow of the cross overspreads the tower . . .

Manifestly, this represents an advanced montage-form, the full significance of which cannot be altogether appreciated when it is separated from the total structure of the film. In the above continuity, not only was there a vast condensation of the various montage-elements (which in the original bring the number of scenes up to more than 150), but the parallel sound-montage was completely omitted. Montage students can clearly recognize the possibilities and position of sound-image counterpoint in such a dynamic conception as the foregoing.

The second half of Part II of Principles of the New World-Cinema will be published in the fourth number of Experimental Cinema. Following it, in the fifth number, will appear Part III, which deals with The Bases of Reflexes and Associations.

*Entire contents copyright by Seymour Stern, 1931.

1 Further investigation and analysis of the film as microcosmos will be made in later papers especially devoted to this revolutionary phase of cine-dialectics.

2 "Dominants" and "overtones," Eisenstein terms, used by him in *The Fourth Dimensions in the Kino*, April 1930 of *Close-Up*, as well as in articles on the same phase in German periodicals.

By "dominant" he means the radically predominant characteristic, and cites, as an example, the "sex appeal" of the beautiful Amer-

ican heroine . . . By "overtone," he means the "additional appeals or attraction-stimulants," and in the same example names the artificially constructed "stimulation-provokers" which create the "overtone complex" around the dominant,—in this case, items such as the material of the heroine's dress, the degree of light and shade used in photographing, polished finger-nails, etc., etc. . . . These form the "overtone complex." To which could also be added, almost endlessly, for the benefit of revolutionary cinematography, which analyzes and exposes all such overtone artifices of the bourgeoisie, stimulation-provokers like the conscious, deliberate pose of innocent virtue of the American middle-class girl and the whole stock of attraction-effects which constitute the complex the Americans call "appearance": shrewdly calculated manner of bearing, tailoring of all kinds (of this it can actually be said there is a definite "Anglo" appearance-complex!), "suave" mannerism, "twinkling" eyes, "loving" gestures, parlor-cultivated voice, "cuteness," the entire battery of effects of American "propaganda-posing" (of the women, especially in American military films), "sweetness and light" (*Seventh Heaven* formula) and so on.

In using the expressions "overtone" and "overtone cumulation" in this article, I mean, specifically, the overtones (of a single dominant) and the overtone cumulations (through a complete series of images) of just these "additional appeals" which exhibit psychological traits and notions of a social class and which constitute a "complex" around a "central stimulation" or nucleus. Reference here is not made to the overtone-montage method as a systematic device of construction. That consideration will be dealt with in a later section.

EDITORS' NOTE

Elsewhere in this issue there appears an article by Samuel Brody entitled "On A Theory of 'Sources'." This article has an interesting history, involving as it does the "loss" of our New York correspondent, attacks upon us in other publications and the making of an active enemy.

Originally, "On A Theory of 'Sources'" was submitted to *Close Up* as a letter criticizing certain reactionary ideas expressed in H. A. Potamkin's monthly American correspondence for that magazine. The criticism was neither personal nor in any sense malicious. The sole intention of its author was to open a discussion on certain debatable points set forth by Potamkin. This was considered all the more urgent as Potamkin at the time consistently persisted in asserting the correctness of the "source" idea. The editors of *Close Up* refused to print the letter, stating that to print an attack on an "accredited foreign correspondent is not in accord with English journalistic ethics." A copy of the article was then sent to the editors of *Experimental Cinema* who submitted it to Potamkin with a request for a reply to be printed in the magazine as a discussion. He refused. This refusal appeared at the time to have no bearing whatsoever on Potamkin's relations with *Experimental Cinema* nor was there the least intimation that it would affect his status as the magazine's New York correspondent.

About seven months later *Close Up* printed a slanderous attack on our group by Potamkin which for unprovoked, savage vituperation has no equal. "Novices," "mystified mystics," "truncated boobs," were but a few of the select terms used to describe us. Our Hollywood correspondent, Seymour Stern, was "frenzied." Braver-Mann was called down for having changed the spelling of his name and for having dared to "wastefully repeat" certain sound ideas expounded by Munsterberg twelve years ago. We were accused of having "trekked to Hollywood—the land of frustrated esthetes . . ." To explain his former association with *Experimental Cinema*, he wrote: "I have been the New York correspondent for it, out of personal sympathy for its editors . . ." And finally, our "aspirations emit a malodor which is even worse than the stench of the west coast marshes." Etc. Etc.

This sudden effusion on the part of one so closely associated with us in our work came like lightning out of a blue sky. It remains a mystery to us until this very day. And apparently this is not the end of Potamkin's campaign against us. We have been notified by him that the *New Freeman* will soon print an article on movie criticism in which we are further "criticized."

The question is: What are Potamkin's intentions and where is he travelling to? How, for instance, are we to explain a recent attack by him on none other than comrade Leon Moussinac, the greatest figure in the international workers' film movement? "Leon Moussinac has not realized his full value to the social understanding of the cinema by neglecting to scrutinize his attitude for a set of values." To those who have followed the writings and activities of Moussinac for many years such statements will seem fantastically malicious. No less malicious, in fact than his puerile castigation of *Experimental Cinema* and those of us who are straining every tendon to create a theoretical and practical basis for a workers' film movement in America. What are we to make of the fact that Potamkin refuses to repudiate or answer "On A Theory of 'Sources'" in our columns when we have invited him to do so? Why the intrigue, the slander, the venom?

Experimental Cinema will live and grow stronger. It will grow with the strengthening of the revolutionary labor movement in America with which its lot has been cast. We will correct the errors of inexperience in our struggle against the reactionary film and for workers' movies in America. We are pledged to work hand in hand with those who see in the cinema a class weapon which must be exposed and employed by the working class. The foundation for the carrying out of our program has already been laid. The present stage of the class struggle calls for an unequivocal stand on the field of battle. It is daily becoming more and more a question of—for or against?

Harry Alan Potamkin, where do you stand?

The Position of the Soviet Cinema

by LEON MOUSSINAC

The Economic Duel of The Cinema

IN the Soviet Union, as in every other country in the world, the cinema today reflects the general economic situation.

The absolute independence of the Soviet cinema from the great electrical trusts is due to the fact that the Socialist state possesses its own economic life, completely detached (insofar as the relations of international exchanges will permit) from the process of industrial and commercial development in capitalist countries. In this connection it is necessary to recall that the cinema of the world (with the exception of the Soviet cinema) finds itself more and more in the hands of a few giant combines. Not so long ago there were some fifteen of these trusts. Today RCA Photophone, Western Electric, Allgemeine Electrizitats Gesellschaft, and the Siemens Company have in principle divided among themselves the motion picture hegemony of the capitalist world. This division is at best temporary. There is already talk of new mergers.

If the present negotiations are successful we shall witness a striking verification, a typical illustration of the marxist theory of the concentration of capital in the hands of a handful of people. At the same time, the motion picture is of all industries the one which most strikingly serves what we might call the imperialism of thought.

There are two great stages to be noted in the evolution of the Soviet cinema. Firstly, in 1925, the founding of SOVKINO.

At the conclusion of the Russo-Polish war in 1923, the Soviet Union undertook the production of films aiming to carry the revolutionary idea to the four corners of the vast empire by means of a living and striking representation of the most essential oppositions in the struggle of two classes. Both the art of the motion picture and the theatre had received special attention from the Soviet government in the early days of the revolutionary struggles. Those were the days when the great Meyerhold covered Russia with his "theatrical shock troops," which were often substitutes for the revolutionary newspapers, then inaccessible to the illiterate peasantry.

The founding of SOVKINO was the first important step in the direction of the concentration and centralization of the cinema in the hands of the Soviet state. The SOVKINO of 1925 foresaw in its statutes an annual plan of production proportionate to its budgetary allotment.

The second important date of the Soviet cinema's progress towards concentration is 1929.

The powers of SOVKINO are increased. It achieves absolute unity of direction by effectively centralizing all the cinematographic organisms of the Union.

Before 1929 the number of these cinematographic organisms was rather small in the various Republics of the Soviet Union. The coexistence of important studios such as the WUFKU in Ukraina and certain organizations in federated republics could proceed without very serious inconveniences.

However, the Five Year Plan, gigantic program of in-

dustrial and cultural achievements, was soon to result in the springing up in many places of new motion picture centers. The unity which governs the political economy of the Soviet Union required an absolute concentration of the "*leviers de commande*."

Competition being non-existent in the Soviet Union (at least as conceived in capitalist countries), it became necessary for budgetary purposes, to avoid the danger of possible duplication and overlapping of functions. Moreover, the same Five-Year-Plan that created new cinema centers is centralizing these same centers in the hands of SOVKINO.

Here, in the official decree's own terms, is the extent of this centralization:

"As a result of the new centralizing reorganization of the Soviet cinema industry, the optico-mechanical trust (camera factories), the photo-chemical trust (film, plate and sensitized paper factories), and the new trust for general production, distribution and exhibition of films **shall be grouped into a single organism.**"

The centralization of the production and distribution of negative film and cameras will permit the development of all branches of the industry on a larger scale than heretofore. It will also make for a broader and better satisfaction of the needs of distant populations in the great localities.

A particularly important fact in the matter of the general qualitative level of production is the creation of "artistic-political soviets in establishments of cinematographic production."

The main tasks of these artistic soviets are: The examination and appreciation of production programs and the control of the work; criticism of finished films or of those in the process of production; relations with the Press; preparation of reports to the central Soviet on the artistic as well as political aspects of films, etc., etc.

The Soviet state monopoly of the film has often been attacked by outsiders.

Here is an example, and, I think, a decisive proof of its efficacy for a country on the road to socialization.

I have in mind the introduction of the sound film in Europe. The great electrical trusts mentioned above have made of the sonorization of films a formidable instrument of speculation. The alleged purpose of the American products was "to act as a palliative to the public's weariness." Thrown on the market in considerable quantities, these films provoked a formidable crisis in European movie houses.

It is only thru its state monopoly that the Soviet Union has been able to avoid the disaster created in capitalist countries by the financial policies of the American sound and talk film. This was possible only in a country where a methodical and rational progression prevails in the economic sphere.

Soviet Union versus United States

In the USSR the role of the cinema is, above all, to por-

tray life, or to defend, to exalt or to criticize an ideology. It is impossible, unless perhaps as an exception, to find in the Soviet Union so-called "pure" or abstract cinema, in which the picture has been created for the picture. This type of film no longer leaves the secrecy of the laboratory.

The cinema, in the Soviet Union, is a concept of reality. Reality is richer and more feverish there than anywhere. The Revolution is a permanent and inexhaustible source of inspiration. It will remain so until socialism shall have triumphed definitely and its aims been fully realized.

In Russia, therefore, there is more social lyricism than elsewhere, a new idea, more constant than in the capitalist cinema and than in the American cinema in particular. One of the great privileges of the Soviet cinema is the absence of all diplomacy, in the expression of the revolutionary ideology.

We have seen that the logical evolution of capitalism on one hand and the growth of Socialism on the other, creates two diametrically opposed economic forms of the cinema: America and USSR. Need it be said that it is at the same time a merciless struggle of two opposed ideologies, of two basically different art principles.

In his "Scenes of Future Life" George Duhamel has spoken in terms of lyrical despair but with somewhat romantic sentimentality of his disgust with the American cinema. His alarm is, however, only too well justified in the presence of the formidably organized besottedness of the current cinema, and that not only in the United States.

In periods of decadence art becomes purely formal, emaciated. Its radiation, its prolongation into the mind of the masses becomes nil. Production, even refined and interesting in certain aspects—an interest of details and purely relative—testifies as a whole to an absence of any real direction. Art is not truly mastered; at every step it finds itself arrested by contingencies of various orders. Nor is it master. That is the case today in the cinema of capitalist countries.

In the same connection it may be said that the judgments (good or bad) of Occidental critics of the Soviet cinema have no value whatever. Whether they praise or attack, they express a viewpoint exclusively esthetic or nationalistic. It is less the artistic than the social quality which impregnates it which must interest one in the Soviet films. That is logical.

We can, if necessary, easily find in the USSR twenty directors whose pure esthetic value,—leaving out of consideration all questions of a political order—is equal, if not superior to most of the Occidental directors. Moreover, it is undeniable that there are in Russia as elsewhere,—neither more nor less—bad films. The very assumption of an infallible production should send shivers down one's back. But all this is, for the moment, of but secondary importance, I think.

To reasonably judge Soviet cinematic production, as well, in fact, as any form of present Russian activity, it is necessary above all to remember that the USSR (as long as it shall have to maintain its dictatorship) remains—**is in a state of revolution.**

The Soviet Cinema must not be considered as a static phenomenon, a realized ideal, for it is, in its present stage, a passing phenomenon.

Obviously, the bourgeois democrat, staid and conservative, and who sees in parliamentary institutions the eternal

symbol of his own stability, will find it difficult to grasp this.

But for a Russian communist the form of the cinema, **like the political form**, is not definitive. It will reflect its transitory requirements and its substance will be primary and govern its form until such time as the Revolution shall have achieved its fundamental tasks.

* * *

Marxist doctrine teaches that science can indicate the authentic tendencies of the future. In the light of this I say: that the silent cinema is incomplete, that the sound film is incomplete, and likewise the talking and stereoscopic films. All these cinematographic forms have nothing definitive. Their role is to be stages in the progress of science towards one of the first perhaps definitive formulas of the cinema: television and consequently telecinema.

The arrival of television is not far off, I believe. In less than five years there will be television stations almost everywhere. Already now, there are many in Germany and in the United States. The delay which we foresee in their universal diffusion is dependent only upon an economic opportunity: Too much capital has been invested in sound apparatus; almost every movie house in the world has been "wired."

Not before money so invested shall have brought its owners 1000% in returns can there be reason to figure on a sufficiently large number of television stations being built by Americans and Germans, who alone at the present time dispose of the material means to do so.

Ah! If the Soviet Union possessed the technical equipment and especially the indispensable financial resources necessary, television would be an accomplished fact. Science has solved the problem, and the question of an economic opportunity for eventual fruitful speculation does not exist in the USSR. Unfortunately, the future of telecinema depends on the interests of business,—or of the gigantic American trusts.

The Five-Year-Plan, conceived and adopted at a time when it was not possible to foresee the realization, evidently precocious, of cinema from great distances, has assigned (the word is not exaggerated) formidable sums of money to assure cinematographic circuits everywhere on the vast territory of the Union. All actual indications point to the fact that by the time these important circuits will be completed, the perfection of television and telecinema shall have been accomplished. Thus considerable and draining financial sacrifices will perhaps have been out of proportion to their final result.

At any rate, telecinema is an invention of which it may be said that it is on the level of a country like the USSR. For its absolute cohesion,—a requirement *sine qua non* of an efficacious application of television,—is much more realizable there than in countries where cutthroat competition makes unification impossible. State monopoly of telecinema in a country marching towards Socialism represents the propaganda instrument of our dreams.

The telecinema,—at last!—will mean the end of artistic sects, of clans, of esoteric chapels. Thanks to it, we shall witness, on the ideological level, the open struggle of two classes. On the one hand it will be the most powerful means that the bourgeoisie will possess to attempt to avoid the Revolution. For the Socialist State it will be the instrument used, among other things, to pass from the transition period it is now in, into a definitive and Socialist position.

Workers Films in New York

TWENTY-FOUR years ago the first American motion-picture studio was opened at 11 East Fourteenth Street in New York by the Mutoscope and Biograph Company. It served as one of the foundations in the building up of a vast machine to supply the American masses with cheap escape from their misery, from the drabness of long days in the shops, factories and mines. "The movies could make their dreams come true," admits Terry Ramsaye, a bourgeois film historian. An artificial dream-world to supply workers with the necessary **cultural minimum** and at the same time build up one of capitalism's most prosperous industries. And at number 11 were born the "stars," indispensable cogs in the machine: Griffith, Pickford, Sennett, the Gishes, Sweet, etc.

1930—A group of class-conscious workers organize the Workers Film and Photo League only two doors away from the old Biograph brownstone house. It is 7 East Fourteenth Street. Twenty-four years separate 7 from 11. The bourgeoisie has developed the screen into a more efficient weapon of reactionary propaganda and decadent "entertainment." It is no longer Fourteenth Street. It is now Hollywood and Long Island. No longer the timid flicker of the silent film. Sound. Talk. Color. Grandeur. Stereoscopic.

But there has been a proletarian revolution in Russia. The Soviet Union has created a cinema that has taught us the fraud and the vulgarity of film productions in our country. The Soviet cinema is the cinema of a class that has achieved its historical task in conquering power. Its films are class films, just as the American film is that of a class in power—a reactionary class doomed to destruction.

The American workers are learning from their Soviet brothers that the film must be used as a weapon in the class struggle. Their own misery and oppression is driving them away from a screen that offers "Love Parades" and "Movietone Follies" while their children stand in breadlines and their wages are cut.

The movie must become our weapon. It must spread the message of struggle against unemployment, starvation and police clubbings. It must reflect the workers' lives and problems.

This task has been assumed by the Workers Film and Photo League, the first organization of its kind in America. It summarizes its program as follows:

To struggle against and expose the reactionary film.

To produce documentary films reflecting the lives and struggles of the American workers.

To spread and popularize the great artistic and revolutionary Soviet productions.

Soviet Photography

The countries of Western Europe, America and Japan have only been able during the last year or two to acquaint themselves, through VOKS exhibitions with the new formations, tendencies and special features characterizing and crystallizing Soviet photography.

Until recently Soviet photography abroad was represented by the best known Soviet photographers, regularly exhibiting in salons and exhibitions, where their work was highly praised for its formal and technical triumphs. In the U.S.S.R. itself, however, the work of these photographers was not so popular. Their methods had been studied and their knowledge made use of, but the social life and cultural demands of the masses in a country building socialism, demanded something more.

The events and facts of the Revolution provided Soviet photography with new, fascinating and rich documental material. Social-economic conditions and cultural-political circumstances and the extraordinary effective value of this material stimulated photographic thought to the mastery of this new subject matter, hence he search for new forms determined by the new theme.

The styles of the old masters—the portrait, lyrical landscape, still lifes, and exhibition studies—lost their hold on the imagination of the public. These styles became obsolete through the inertia of dust traditions with roots in the formal methods of studio painting.

The easel picture or individual studio painting underwent utter catastrophe after the revolution, losing many of its best representatives to photography and the cinema, because of its inadequacy to satisfy modern demands. The static nature of art photography, aping the art of painting, the calm balance of the elements of composition, soft tonal transference, lyrical diffused contours and misty light and shade, the stereotyped "picturesque," static perspectives and construction—all this was not in accord with the new world outlook. Life brought new material and dictated a new form. The tempestuous new life drew the art photographer also in its whirlpool, away from mannered exhibition studies, narrow, studio work. Soviet actuality itself provided the themes in infinite variety, for Soviet photography.

The Revolution helped photography to emancipate itself from the art of painting earlier and more thoroughly in the Soviet Union, than in other countries and photography in the USSR no longer depends slavishly upon the emulation of art, but has already found its own methods as an independent art.

The dynamics and pace of modern life in capitalist countries have already created, formally, an artistic revolution in the sphere of photography in other countries too. The legitimate cannons for painting have already been rejected by many of the most prominent European photographers, but the isolation of the individual artist in Western Europe leads him to merely formal investigations and abstract photography.

The richness, the exuberance of Soviet social life provide the Soviet photographer with vital subjects and in working upon the subject matter, struggling to attain the utmost expressiveness, he photographer is stimulated towards the search for new, adequate forms and solutions for these problems. Thus documentary or "chronicle" photography is at the present stage of photographic evolution in the USSR, the most characteristic form in which vital social experience and penetrating photographic experiment meet.

MOSCOW, U.S.S.R.

G. BOLTIANSKY.

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Subscriptions { France Frs: 72
(12 issues) { Belgium, Germany " 84
 { Great Britain, America " 98

Single Copies: French Francs, 7.50 (monthly)

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EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA

302 East 59th Street, New York City.

Domestic—\$2.00 for 12 issues

Foreign—\$2.50 for 12 issues

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A NATIVE QUARTERLY

WINTER 1931

LIONEL ABEL — EUGENE ATGET — MARY BUTTS — ERSKINE CALDWELL — EDWARD DAHLBERG — HORACE GREGORY — MAURICE GROSSER — GEORGES HUGNET — SIDNEY HUNT — RICHARD JOHNS — MARGARET LAIGHTON — NORMAN MACLEOD — SHERRY MANGAN — ROBERT McALMON — DONAL McKENZIE — EZRA POUND — GERTRUDE STEIN — RICHARD THOMA — ALICE TRUMBULL — WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS — ROMER WILSON — LOUIS ZUKOFSKY

50c a copy \$2.00 the year

Edited by

RICHARD JOHNS

9 GRAMERCY PARK NEW YORK CITY

ANNOUNCEMENT

During 1931, CLOSE UP will be issued as a quarterly, in—

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DECEMBER

The size will be very much increased, in respect of contents and format.

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This step has become necessary and desirable through the popularity of the talking film and the imminent developments that will lead from it to revolution in screen technique. Only by issuing *Close Up* as a quarterly are the editors enabled to cope with these developments intrinsically and fundamentally. As films—through speech—are becoming more and more national, in proportion the function of an international journal such as *Close Up* is complicated. To remain internationally relevant, and of value, it must be adapted to the exigencies of the present and the future. Each number will contain concentrated study, either of films of different countries, or of developments in technique with the theoretical deductions applicable to them. Thus each number will be also a record of permanent value in film history.

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EXPERIMENTAL

CINEMA

“QUE VIVA MEXICO!”

EISENSTEIN, ALEXANDROV, TISSE



NUMBER

4

FIFTY CENTS

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

AGUSTIN ARAGON LEIVA, a native Mexican by more than 400 years of descent, was Eisenstein's Mexican assistant throughout the production of *Que Viva Mexico!* He served as interpreter for Eisenstein among the various tribes of Mexican-Indians, as guide into the innermost corners of the land, and as adviser on Mexican folklore and history. He is General Secretary of the Mexican Cine Club and has recently published in the leading Mexican magazine, *Contemporaneos*, translations of Eisenstein's essays on film-art.

SERGEI MIKHAILOVITCH EISENSTEIN needs no introduction to the readers of *Experimental Cinema*. His films to date are: *Workers, Strike!*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (October), *Old and New*, and a two-reel experimental sound-film, *Romance Sentimentale*. The last three pictures were produced by Eisenstein in collaboration with his co-director, G. V. Alexandrov, and all of them were photographed by Eduard Tisse. *Que Viva Mexico!* is an independent film, having no connection with the Mexican, Soviet or American film-industries. It was privately financed by a group of California liberals who admire Eisenstein's work.

MORRIS HELPRIN, a young writer and film-student, went to Mexico several months ago for the purpose of observing Eisenstein at work. Previously connected with the publicity department of United Artists Studios in Hollywood.

BELA BALAZS, an internationally known Hungarian film-theorist and scenarist, is the author of a book originally published in German, *Der Sichtbare Mensch* (*The Invisible Man*), a treatise on the general esthetics of the cinema. He recently published another book, *The Spirit of the Film*, and is now working in the U.S.S.R. on sound-films.

J. M. VALDES-RODRIGUEZ, a young Cuban, has written a number of essays on the economy and politics of Cuba. Some of these essays have appeared in various issues of the foremost Cuban intellectual journal, *La Revista de la Habana*. He has also made several translations of stories and books by John Reed. Valdes-Rodriguez is now studying the cinema and is General Secretary of the Cine Club of Cuba.

M. KAUFMAN is a prominent Soviet film-director. He has made a number of experimental films on the strength of which he evolved the system of montage used in his first feature film, *Spring*. He wrote an essay on *The Evolution of the Soviet Cinema*, published in *Left No. 1*.

ALEXANDER BRAILOVSKY. Born in Russia, took an active part in the Russian liberation movement before, during and after the Revolution of 1905; at the age of eighteen was exiled to Siberia; escaped from the famous "Czar's Prison" in Akatui, on the border of Manchuria; studied in Italy and the Paris Sorbonne; edited Russian dailies in U.S.A.; lately has been devoting himself to studies in the field of musical theory; author of *Fragments from the Russian Suite*. While instructing S. M. Eisenstein and G. V. Alexandrov in the theory of music, became interested in the problems of the cinema; beginning with this issue on the editorial board of *Experimental Cinema*.

SOMERSET LOGAN, writer living in Hollywood, has contributed frequently to *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, etc.

MICHAEL ROSE ROBERTS, formerly of the Merseyside Workers' Film Society, is now in Liverpool producing a documentary film of the dock-workers' condition in that city.

GEORGE W. LIGHTON is a young American born and brought up in Kentucky. Last year, when Eisenstein was in Hollywood, he bummed across the country for the sole purpose of meeting him. Has just returned from a trip to the Harlan-Bell coal fields in Eastern Kentucky, where, he writes, 10,000 striking miners are fighting against capitalist slavery.

WERNER KLINGLER, a film-student and actor, has contributed technical essays to previous numbers of *Experimental Cinema*. Played the part of the captured German war-ace in *Dawn Patrol*, and several important roles in M-G-M foreign versions.

N. SOLEW, Moscow correspondent for *Experimental Cinema*, worked last year in the foreign department of the Inform-Bureau of Soyouskino. Now on the staff of *The Moscow News* and at the same time studying cinematography in Sovkino studios.

LEWIS JACOBS, in New York, is working on the montage of a feature-length documentary film for The Workers' Film and Photo League. Made two short experimental films in 1930.

RALPH BOND is one of the organizers of a proletarian film-group in London. He produced, for this group, a celebrated documentary-film called *1931*. The picture was shown throughout England and was acclaimed by the workers as a vivid depiction of their misery and struggle.

VICTOR P. SMIRNOV is the new head of the Amkino Office in New York City.

G. L. GEORGE, a French newspaper man, is a contributor to *Du Cinema*, *La Revue des Vivants*, *La Courte Paille*, and other European magazines. Recognized in Europe as one of the foremost authorities on Soviet cinema.

Cover design by Victor Mall

Published by: **STANLEY ROSE and JOHN MURRAY**

EDITORIAL OFFICE: EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA 1625 N. Vine Street, Hollywood, California, U. S. A.
BUSINESS OFFICE: EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA 407 East Pico, Los Angeles, California, U. S. A.

● All manuscripts and letters of inquiry regarding the film-movement should be addressed to the Editors at 1625 N. Vine St., Hollywood, California, U. S. A.

● All checks, subscriptions, money orders, advertisements, etc., should be addressed to the Business Manager at 407 East Pico, Los Angeles, California, U. S. A.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$2.00 per year (four numbers) in U. S. A.; \$2.50 per year foreign. 50 cents per copy.
BACK COPIES of Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are sold at premium prices. There are very few copies of these issues left.
E. C. No. 1: \$2.00 per copy; E. C. No. 2: \$1.50 per copy; E. C. No. 3: \$1.00 per copy.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA is an advanced American film magazine established to counteract the reactionary political, psychological and conventional formalistic tendencies of the capitalist film industry.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA covers all the basic forms and activities of the cinema, considering film-art as one of the most powerful ideological weapons in the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes and oppressed nationalities.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA *will struggle:*

1. Against the existing monopoly of film-art by Capital
2. Against the subjugation of creative artistic work to the interests and conventional dogmas of the dominant moneyed class
3. Against the suppression from the screen of the most vital and burning social problems and facts of modern life.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA *will endeavor:*

1. To make possible in the United States the production of artistic films that will reveal the American scene as it is, without disguising, as the case may be, its brutalities, inequalities and sharp class-division

2. To encourage and stimulate the proletarian film-movement throughout the Western hemisphere

3. To counteract the coarse commercial spirit and purpose of capitalist films

4. To render accessible to film-students important theoretical and technical writings on film-problems, with special emphasis on the theoretical and practical work now being carried on by the film-workers in the Soviet Union and independent groups of cinematographers in other countries.

While popularizing such works as outstanding manifestations of a rising new culture, not based on profit as the motive, EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA will consider bourgeois films insofar as they contain the elements of real life and insofar as they may be of use in helping film-students and film-workers to formulate a richer conception of the problems of cinematography in general.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA hopes by its example to stimulate a new spirit in the American theatre and all allied arts as part of the general international movement against capitalist ideology and commercialized esthetics.

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A STATEMENT BY THEODORE DREISER

TO THE EDITORS: I am pleased to send you this short article. The purpose of your magazine, it seems to me, is very worthwhile, and I hope it will have tangible results.

I thoroughly believe in the policy of **EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA** to encourage movies on the labor movement to be shown specifically to an audience desiring them. One of the paramount needs is the specialized motion picture for particular audiences. As it is today, mass-production in the movies, as in other industries, is lowering the standards. Every person must be dragged down to witness the same inane, commonplace, and totally inartistic pictures.

I believe that independent efforts such as this should be made to further movies dealing with the great historical struggle of labor, its dramatic developments recently in Russia, and with its reaction on the ideas of world labor at large. The man who fights for labor should be portrayed as just to his fellow-workers and hence striving for the common good. If an interested group which has the laborer's welfare at heart does not pursue this, it will not be accomplished. Certainly Big Business Hollywood, with its frenzy for money and sex, or even capital-

ism, which runs Hollywood, will never do anything for the worker.

Furthermore, Hollywood enjoys the support of the United States government in the making of military films to further a capitalism which takes all it can from the laborer.

Great pictures of the class struggle deserve encouragement. Americans should witness them and hence understand the idea of class vs. class. But no, this is not allowed in the United States. Instead, boycott! "Mother," the film from Gorki's masterpiece, a novel by the same name, has already been banned here, and such film-masterpieces as "Storm Over Asia" and "The End of St. Petersburg," by Pudovkin, have been only partially released, or abridged. Such boycotts and bans should be resisted and any law prohibiting the showing of these films should be protested in the one way people have of showing their disfavor of a certain statute—by breaking it. These great labor movements must reach the laborer by way of the films.

THEODORE DREISER



‘ ‘ Q U E V I V A M E X I C O ! ’ ’

A Film by S. M. Eisenstein, G. V. Alexandrov and Eduard Tisse, produced in Mexico 1931-32. S. M. Eisenstein Collective Productions.

EISENSTEIN'S FILM ON MEXICO

Subject of the Film

Projecting the concrete into the abstract, a greater generalization: the subject of the film had to be a selection of the fundamental elements of the Mexican drama.

Therefore, it deals:

with all our historical and prehistorical periods, with our main geographical sections that have remarkably conditioned collective life, and with all influences that are foreign.

So, the subject of the film is

the whole Mexico. Past, present and future.

As ages in Mexico are not in a vertical sequence, but in a horizontal development, spread out like an unusual fan.

Time of the Action

Being ideal, the construction, considered as a whole time, is dissolved in a combination of epochs. But on quite a few occasions it becomes definite.

Structure of the Film

Like a symphony, in which different movements are unified in spirit and form through the expression of the same IDEA of a superior order.

Technique

The cinematographic melodies have their own counterpoint and every one requires a different harmonization.

In this fashion there are as many rhythms, graphic compositions and photographs, and finally, montages, as there are parts in the film.

Conflicts

Spontaneity, or nature in itself—

Man with nature

Man with man

and the emphasis of the conflict between the two principal geographical sections of the country—the tropics and the high lands, where air is subtle as the breath of a blythe spirit and life is hard.

Each one producing different cultures, habits, types, problems and struggles.

But both of them the same in the final result produced by revolution, through which the Mexican people has striven to build up its collective unity—and still is striving.

Conclusion

The film is a poem of a sociological character. Rather an interpretative essay on Mexican evolution.

By its deep significance and form, I consider it a new type of *genre* in cinematography, with no antecedents, and achieving perfection at once. Also a film very difficult to surpass and even to imitate.

The elements described

Eisenstein uses about three thousand different elements:

all distinctive and important types of Indians, Meztizos, Spaniards,

Europeanized and Americanized Mexicans, genuine *costumes* and multifarious combinations of them with background, illuminations and faces...

architecture—primitive, Mayan, Aztec, Toltec, etc.

colonial Spanish at the periods corresponding to three hundred years...

all tropical landscapes on both coasts, so combined as to look just like a tropic splendid beyond literary description and never seen on the screen before. the desert, the sacred snow-peaked mountains, woods, rivers and the two oceans, animals of every kind, especially monkeys, the plants that symbolize human struggle. So,

he uses:

palm trees of about twenty types, the Maguey plant in the most plastic variety, the Henaquen plant, the virile cactus (organs)

every one correlated to the group-drama it conditions:

bull-fights

ritual dances

chiefs

skeletons, the very counterpoint of the play when combined with:

toys.

Besides this:

Predominance of women, or matriarchate;

the dominion of men,

confusion.

And an infinite variety of combinations of the above-listed elements.

In this way Eisenstein has practically stolen from the Mexican nation all her secrets, dreams and feelings accumulated during five thousand years.

But all this looks very monumental. The interesting fact to be noticed lies in the choice of materials. Eisenstein has selected only the genuine, the pure, the refined, the generic, because he has a wonderful taste. So he rejects the exotic, which has been the passion of all tourists and superficial writers who have visited Mexico in the last hundred years.

Eisenstein has proven to be the greatest bandit of our beauty!

He deserves capital punishment. We should burn him at the stake!

If we don't do it, we should at least leave him to the rage of the legion of his imitators and followers who are going to find out that he sucked up everything and left nothing to their craving for the exotic.

Some Details

He shows actual primitive life as a paradise, and

* Agustin Aragon Leiva was special assistant to Eisenstein on the production, serving in the capacity of guide, interpreter and adviser on Mexican folklore and history. The above interpretation of the film has been authorized by Eisenstein.

this can be verified by anyone at Tehuantepec, for instance.

And just after this delightful impression he shows the contrast of the hard life of the high plateaus, so near to the skies, where beauty endures, but there is no abundance and pain dominates.

We are sad, tragedy beats our emotion; we are suffering. Then, just like in Beethoven's symphonies, the *scherzo* comes.

There is joy, and external overadorned beauty, gayety, fiesta, celebrations, love.

We are happy, we feel adoration toward the magnificence of life.

Then . . . humor . . . irony . . . sarcasm . . . and we get back to reality

Tragedy stills . .

Revolution is on the wheel . .

Here, the Greek conception of the theatrical,—but the chorus are desert steppes, calcinated mountains, the sound of machine-guns. We get to despair.

Finale . . . The suffering of men upon Earth is not without an aim or a positive result. We return to happiness, an ideal happiness, that we wish for and that maybe we shall never see. But it exists. The Mexican revolution has to lead Mexicans to a place where they can rest in peace, working and fighting for the new order.

We see that in this film Eisenstein displays every kind of emotion: the religious, the mystic, the solemn, the dramatic and the melodramatic, the frivolous, the tragic, the humorous and the ironical, the sarcastic. But all is shaped in lyrical moulds. The sensual appeal of his film is astonishingly great.

Philosophy

We must use this mysterious word to designate the profound significances that involve some parts of the film.

Eisenstein looks for collective expression and we

cannot find these in contemporary art. Primitive mentality, primitive life, call our attention to these collective expressions. Because in the corresponding art, every trace, each detail, conveys a transcendental collective meaning. Subjective art, or so-called "art," imitates this achievement only in external appearances. But nothing is left for the fetishistic significance that is transmissible and understandable for everybody.

Eisenstein has realized this in a startling way and we must look through his whole picture for this inner significance. I think that only a few will get it. Because symbolism of this kind is not detectable at first sight. For instance, there is a sharp connection between the thing portrayed in the maguey episode and the shape of this plant. Both relate to the predominance of men in the corresponding society group. And the whole composition follows the indications of this shape.

This is why Eisenstein sometimes looks to me as if he were thousands of years old!

And

I think that Eisenstein has brought bad luck to my country. We Mexicans are going to live eternally ashamed of our sins against ourselves. We had not realized how great and profound is our tradition, our life, our beauty. We were looking for cheap importations of the exotic. Despite the fact that we had a legion of heroes of our own discovery. But they were Mexicans and got immersed in the whole panorama and at the same time sank into oblivion. Now Eisenstein has signaled a road, but we feel too poor, feeble and discouraged to follow his steps. For many years the Mexican land shall be dominated by intellectual sterility. Probably we'll wake up when the film of Eisenstein shall be only a memory of the past.

For he has practically stolen all the beauty of our country!

Mexico City, November 7, 1931.

THE PRINCIPLES OF FILM FORM

According to Marx and Engels

The dialectic System is only the conscious reproduction of the dialectic flow (Existence) of the external events of the world.

Thus:

The projection of the dialectic system of things
—into the mind—
—into abstract shapes—
—into thoughts—
yields dialectic thought-methods—dialectic materialism
PHILOSOPHY

And similarly:

The projection of the same system of things
—into concrete shapes—
—into forms—
yields ART

The basis of this philosophy is the dynamic comprehension of things:

Being—as a constant Becoming
from the interaction of two contrasting opposites.

Synthesis, arising
from the opposition between Thesis and Antithesis.

In the same degree the dynamic comprehension of things is basic for the correct understanding of Art and all Art-forms.

In the realm of Art this dialectic principle of dynamics incarnates itself in

CONFLICT

as the fundamental basic principle of the substance of every Art-work and every Art-form.

For Art is always Conflict

1. In accordance with its social function.
2. In accordance with its substance.
3. In accordance with its methodology.

1. In accordance with its social function—

For:

The task of art is—the bringing to light of the conflicts of the Existing. By the awakening of conflicts in the observer. The emotional forging of a correct intellectual concept by the dynamic collision of the contrasted passions.

The formation thus of correct perception.

2. In accordance with its substance—

For:

In its substance it consists of a conflict between Natural Existence and Creative Impulse. Between Organic Inertia and Purposive Initiative.

Hypertrophy of the purposive impulse—the principle of rational logic—causes the Art to freeze to a mathematical technicalism.

(A landscape becomes a blue-print, Saint Sebastian becomes an anatomical map.)

Hypertrophy of organic naturalism—organic logic—drowns the Art in formlessness.

(Malevitch—becomes Kaulbach
Archipenko—a waxworks show.)

Because:

The limit of organic form
(the passive Existence-principle) *is NATURE.*

The limit of rational form
(the active Production-principle) *is INDUSTRY.*

AND:

On the point of intersection between
Nature and Industry stands ART.

1. The Logic of Organic form
against

2. The Logic of Rational form

Yields in collision the

Dialectic of Art-form

The interaction of the two engenders and conditions Dynamism

(Not only in the space-time sense—but also in the purely conceptual field. I regard the appearance of new concepts and precepts in the conflict between usual appearance and special representation as exactly a dynamic-dynamisation of the perception—a dynamisation of the “traditional apprehension” into a new apprehension.)

The degree of distance determines the intensity of the tension.

(See, for example, in Music the concept of interval. Here there can be instances where the distance of separation is so wide that it leads to a shattering by breakage of the singleness of the Art-apprehension. The incapacity to be heard of certain Intervals.)

The form of this dynamics in space and time is Expression.

The tension-stages—are Rhythm.

This is true of every Art-form, indeed yet more, for every form of expression.

Similar is the conflict in Human Expression, between conditioned and unconditioned reflexes.

And exactly similarly is the same true in every field, in so far as it can be comprehended as an Art: thus, for example, Logical Thought also, considered as an Art, shows the same dynamic mechanics:

“The intellectual life of a Plato or a Dante becomes in high degree conditioned and nourished by his pleasure in the simple beauty of the rhythmic relation between rule and example, between kind and individual.” (G. Wallas, “The Great Society.”)

So also in other fields. E.g., in speech, where the sap liveness and dynamism arise from the irregularity of the detail in relation to the rule of the system as a whole.

In contrast is the sterility of expression of the artificial, altogether regular languages, as, for example, Esperanto.

From the same principle is derived the whole charm of poetry, the rhythm of which arises as a conflict between the metric measure and the distribution of accents, confusing this measure.

Even a formally static appearance is capable of comprehension as a dynamic function dialectically, as is imaged in the sage words of Goethe, that:

"Architecture is frozen music."

To a comprehension of this type we shall return later.

And just as, in the case of a single ideology (a monistic viewpoint) the whole, as well as the last detail, must be penetrated by the one single principle—

So there ranges itself with the Conflict of Social Conditionality, and with the Conflict of Substance Existing, the same Conflict-principle as keystone of the Methodology of Art. As foundation principle of the rhythm yet to be created and the appearing of the Art-form.

3. In accordance with its methodology—

Here we shall consider the general Art-problem in the individual example of its highest form—Film form.

The Shot and Montage—are the basic elements of the Film.

MONTAGE

The Soviet film has established it as the nerve of the Film.

To determine the nature of Montage is to solve the specific problem of the Film.

The film-makers of old, and also the theoretically quite antiquated Lev Kuleshov, considered Montage as a means of bringing something before the spectator, in describing the something, by sticking the separate shots one upon the other like building-blocks.

The movement in each shot and the consequent length of the pieces is then to be considered as rhythm.

A conception entirely false.

The determination of a given object solely in accordance with the nature of its external flow; the valuation of the mechanical sticking-together process as a principle.

We must not describe such a length-relationship as rhythm.

From it there results a measure as opposite to rhythm, properly considered, as the mechanical-metric Mensendiek system is opposite to the organic rhythmic Bode school in matters of bodily expression.

According to this definition, shared as a theoretician even by Pudovkin, Montage is the means of *unrolling* an idea on the shot separate pieces (The Epic Principle).

According to my opinion, however, Montage is not an idea recounted by pieces following each other, *but an idea that arises in the collision of two pieces independent of one another.* (The Dynamic Principle.)

("Epic" and "Dynamic" in the sense of methodology of form, not of content or action.)

As in Japanese hieroglyphics, where two independent ideographical signs ("Shots"), placed in juxtaposition, explode to a new concept.

Thus: Eye + Ear = To weep
Door + Ear = To eavesdrop
Child + Mouth = To cry
Mouth + Dog = To bark
Mouth + Birds = To sing
Knife + Heart = Sorrow

(Abel Rémusat: "Recherches sur l'origine de la formation de l'écriture chinoise.")

A sophism? Certainly not!

For here we seek to define the whole nature of the principal part and spirit of the film from its technical (optical) basis.

We know that the phenomenon of movement in the Film resided in the fact that two motionless images of a moving body following one another in juxtaposition, blend into each other after sequential showing in movement.

This vulgar description of what occurs as a blending has its share of responsibility for the vulgar comprehension of the nature of Montage quoted above.

Let us examine more exactly the course of the phenomenon we are discussing, how it really occurs, and draw conclusion from it.

Two shot immobilities next to each other result in the arising of a concept of movement.

Is this accurate? Pictorially-phraseologically yes. But mechanically the process is otherwise.

For, in fact, each sequential element is shot not *next to* the other, but *on top of* the other.

FOR: The movement-percent, (or feeling) arises in the process of the *superposition* on the *received* impression of the first position of an object of the *becoming-visible* new position of the object.

Thus, by the way, arises the phenomenon of spacial depth, as optical superposition of two surfaces in stereoscopy.

From the superposition of two measures of the same dimension always arises a new, higher dimension.

As in the case of stereoscopy the superposition of two not identical two-dimensionality results in stereoscopic three-dimensionality.

In another field:

A concrete word (a designation) set by the side of a concrete word yields an abstract concept.

As in Japanese, (see above), when a *material* ideogram set in juxtaposition to a *material* ideogram connotes a *transcendental* result (a concept).

The contour incongruence of the first picture, already penetrated into consciousness, and the now actually being accepted second picture—the conflict of the two—engenders the movement-feeling, the percept of the flow of a movement.

The degree of incongruence conditions the impression-intensity, conditions the tension, which, in conjunction with that following, becomes the real element of the peculiar rhythm.

Here we have, temporally, what we see arise spacially on a graphic or painted surface.

In what consists the dynamic effect of a painting?

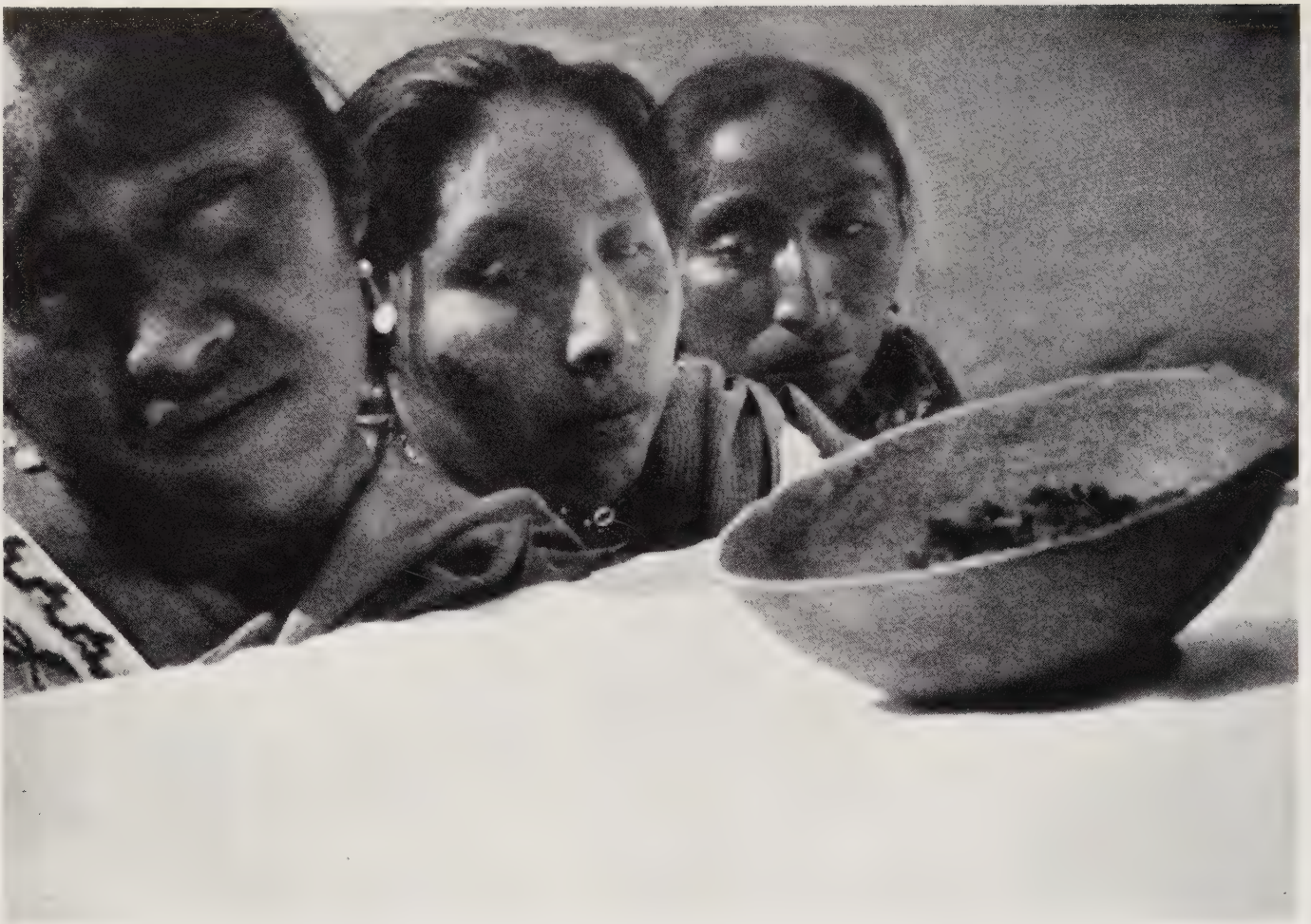
The eye follows the direction of an element. Receives an impression, which then collides with that derived from following the direction of a second element. The conflict of these directions builds the dynamic effect in the apprehension of the whole.

I. It may be purely linear: Fernand Leger. Suprematism.



Martin Hernandez, 21-year-old Mexican-Indian peasant, native of Apam, the principal character in the second story of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!", episode entitled "MAGUEY."

Photo by Jimenez. Courtesy S. M. Eisenstein Collective Productions.



Mexican women mourning over the coffin of the dead boy. From the "Maguey" episode.



*The Mayan Indians—
a funeral ceremony*

II. It may be "anecdotal." The secret of the marvelous mobility of the figures of Daumier and Lautrec resides in the fact that the various anatomical parts of the body are represented in spacial circumstances (positions) temporally various.

(see, e. g., Lautrec's "Miss Cecy Loftus.")

Logically developing the position A of the foot, one builds a body position A corresponding to it. But the body is represented from knee up already in position A + a. A cinematic effect is here already provided for the motionless picture. From hips to shoulders is already A + a + a. The figure seems alive and kicking.)

III. Between I and II lies primitive Italian Futurism.

"The Man with Six Legs in 6 Positions." (Between I and II. For II obtains its effects with retention of natural unity and anatomical integrity. I, on the other hand, with pure elementary elements, but III, although repudiating naturalism, has not yet pressed forward to the abstract.)

IV. It may also be of ideographic kind. Thus the pregnant characterisation of a Sharaku (Japan—18th Century). The secret of his utmost refined strength of expression lies in the anatomical and spacial disproportion of the parts. (II might be termed temporal disproportion). This is discussed by Julius Kurth ("Sharaku"). He describes the portrait of an actor, comparing it with a mask:

"..... While the mask has been constructed according to fairly accurate anatomical proportions, the proportions of the portrait are simply impossible. The space between the eyes comprises a width that makes mock of all good sense. The nose is almost twice the as long, in relation to the eyes, as any normal nose would dare to be, the chin stands in no sort of relation to the mouth.....

"The same observation may be made in all the large heads of Sharaku. That the master was unaware that all these proportions are false is, of course, out of the question. He has repudiated normality with full awareness, and, while the drawing of the separate parts depends on severely concentrated naturalism, their proportions have been subordinated to considerations purely ideal." (Pp. 80, 81.)

The spacial extension of the relative size of one detail in correspondence with another, and the consequent collision between the proportions designed by the artist for that purpose—result in the *characterisation* of—the *comment* upon—the represented person.

Finally—Colour. A colour tone imparts to our vision a given rhythm of vibration. (This is not to be taken figuratively, but actually physiologically, for colours are distinguished from one another by the number of their vibrations).

The adjacent colour tone is in another rate of vibration.

The counterpoint (conflict) of the two—the received and the now supplanting vibration rates—yields the dynamism of the apprehension of Colour-play.

Hence we have only to make a step from visual vibrations to acoustic and we stand in the field of Music.

From the domain of the spacial-visual.

To the domain of the temporal-visual.

Here the same law obtains. For counterpoint is, in Music, not only the composition-form, but paramountly the factor basic for every possibility of tone perception and differentiation.

It may almost be said that here, in every case we have cited, we have seen in force the same *Principle of Comparison*, making possible for us, always and in every field, definition and perception.

In the fluid image (the Film) we have, so to speak, the synthesis of these two counterpoints. From the image the spacial and from music—the temporal. In the Film, and characterising it, occurs what we may describe as:

VISUAL COUNTERPOINT

The application of this expression to the film opens up several straight lines to the problem, indicative of a sort of Film-Grammar.

In fact, a syntax of Film externals, in which the visual counterpoint conditions a whole new system of external forms. And for all this:

As *Basic Preliminaries*:

The Shot is not an Element of Montage. —

The Shot is a Montage Cell (or Molecule)

In this sentence is the leap of the dualistic division in analysis:

From: Title and Shot

And: Shot and Montage.

Instead of this they should be considered dialectically as three various *form phases*—of *one single expressive task*.

With single characteristics, conditioning the singleness of their construction laws.

Interdependence of the three:

A conflict within a thesis (abstract idea)—

1. formulates itself in the dialectics of the Title.

2. projects itself spacially in the interior conflict of the Shot.

3. explodes with increasing intensity in the inter-shot Conflict-Montage.

In full analogy, once more, to human-psychological expression.

This is—Conflict of Motive. Comprehensible equally in three phases:

1. Pure verbal utterance. Without intonation. *Speech* expression.

2. Gesticulatory (mimic-intonational) expression.

Projection of the conflict onto the whole externally active body-system of man. "Gesture" and "Sound-gesture" (Intonation).

3. Projection of the conflict into the spacial field. With the increasing intensity, the zig-zag of mimic expression expands, in the same distortion formula, into the surrounding space. An expressive zig-zag, arising from the space-cleavage of the man moving himself in space.

Herein lies the basis for an entirely new comprehension of the problem.

Film-form. As example of Conflicts one may instance:

1. Graphic Conflict
2. Conflict of Planes
3. Conflict of Volumes
4. Space Conflict
5. Lighting Conflict
6. Tempo Conflict, etc., etc.

(Here each is listed by its principle-feature, its dominant. Of course, it is understood that they occur chiefly as complexes, dovetailing into one another. As with Shots, so, correctly, with Montage.)

For transition to Montage, it suffices for any example to divide into two independent primary pieces.

How far the conception of Conflict leads in dealing with Film-forms is indicated by the following further examples:

7. Conflict between a Material and its Angle (attained by special distortion through camera position).

8. Conflict between a Material and its Spatial Nature (attained by optical distortion through the lens).

9. Conflict between a Process and its Temporal Nature (attained by slow-motion and speeding-up).

and finally

10. Conflict between the whole Optical Complex and some quite other sphere.

Thus does Conflict between Optical and Acoustical impulses produce:

The SOUND FILM

which is capable of being realized as

Visual—Sound Counterpoint

The formulating and consideration of Film appearance as forms of Conflict yield the first possibility of devising a *single system of visual dramaturgy* covering all general detail cases of the problem.

Of devising a dramaturgy of visual Film-form as precise as the existing precise dramaturgy of Film-narrative.

Zürich, 2/11/29

Translation by Ivor Montagu in Hollywood, Calif.

"QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

Eisenstein in Mexico

"Que Viva Mexico!"

It is the first film made in the Western hemisphere to assume the mantle of maturity. The furthest step yet from the idiocies of corn-fed Hollywood. It turns its tail up at the banal; thumbs its nose at the benign. It is pictorial rhetoric of such vital force that it thunders and roars. Yet it contains every aspect of the popular cinema.

"QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

That day at Los Remedios, when we walked over the hills in search of a suitable location, served as an indication of Eisenstein's preciseness, his exciting demands that his subject be even in quality. All Mexico around us was "beautiful enough to swoon in." Here was no prettiness of the postcardy cinema, none of your oak-panelled pictures that need but sprinklings of chemical brilliants to turn them into revolting chromos. The top of a mountain and an ancient aqueduct jutting at a seven-thousand foot height into a stilled canopy of swan-white clouds. You could set your camera down at almost any spot and grind. And have a beautiful scenic.

But the Russian, followed hastily by Tisse, his cameraman; Aragon, a young Mexican intellectual who serves as a guide, interpreter and go-between, a camera boy and myself, trailed by five peons who were the day's actors at a peso each, led a frantic chase to find THE spot. Following which were at least a dozen of THE spots.

Eisenstein was introduced to Mexico by his Mexican friend, the film-student, Agustin Aragon Leiva, whose forebears took root 400 years ago and whose love for his country is as intense as Eisenstein's love for the cinema. Through this young Mexican and other friends of the Russian, Mexico was thrown practically into Eisenstein's lap. There is hardly anything in the country not at his disposal.

Toiling in the sun from early in the morning, through the noon that is characteristically Mexican with its burning heat, until the landscape began to cool, we dragged Christ from the church to lie, pathetically unaware of Eisenstein, staring at the blue bowl that is Heaven, while a machine recorded its image on revolving celluloid. Poor Father who art not in Eisenstein's heaven, hallowed be thy name now, for who knows how you will be used eventually in this record of living Mexico!

A fine Christ the largest statue was. Brought from Spain with blood painted beautifully down his sides and a slot, like openings into which one inserts nickels, carefully chiselled in the thinnish chest. And the beard, fine pictorially, stylized into a Grecian combing with decorative loops. The whole, sprinkled with the dusts of decades that have filtered beneath the crevices of

the glass covering, lay on purple silk in the open courtyard, while the populace of Los Remedios gathered in appropriate awe—awe and reverence in spite of the boy who ordinarily pulled the bell ropes in the steeple, but who now insisted on passing wind against a nearby tombstone and who mingled his derisive laughter with the reverberations of his gaseous intestine.

And the padre, inducing a member of his flock to shed a pearly tear on the statue as the camera ground on. And the two little girls who sold votive candles who were recruited for the scene but who fled at the last minute, showing up later on the roof, beshawled and still timid before this Frankenstein monster.

"Perhaps," says the padre, "we could have some enlarged pictures of this for the members of my parish?"

And Eisenstein assenting a too-ready "yes."

No food for us during the day's work except a bottle of warm beer that was as quickly spat out at the flies.

No rest while Eisenstein sees light in the skies. After eleven months of it he is as active in his picture-making as during the first days. What significance fatigue, when this will be the first film made on the American Continent worth preserving for its sociological import? What are the dangers of jungle, mountain, or sea, when you coincidentally explore human nature?

How can men like Carleton Beales, Stuart Chase and the like, live and travel in a country for months, years, without sensing what the Russian grasped in so short a while? How can writers who have lived decades in Mexico publish learned and boring works on the country without so much as nodding in the direction of certain Mexican fundamentals? Chase regurgitates a literary catalogue that tells about an isolated community, hardly representative of Mexico, which, because its bandstand is like a bandstand of another township, is labelled the "Middletown" of Mexico. He wonders naively about silk stockings, radios and autos. Beales' connection with Mexican officialdom would never permit an undistorted view of conditions as they exist.

Yet Eisenstein walks in and senses the basic force that motivates Mexican life and that will eventually be the prompting means of securing freedom. He has recognized the part that woman plays in the social and economic life of the country and around this has constructed his film.

As an admirer of the work of Rivera, the Diego Rivera who is now accepting fabulous sums for painting frescoes in America, his cinematic work was first influenced by that painter's representations. The fiesta,

the flowers, the color and the action were of prime importance in the early stages of filmization, but one wonders, after hearing of the change, whether or not Eisenstein's film will not more closely resemble the lower-keyed work of Orozco whose sympathies are more clearly defined, less prettified with paint, and hardly sentimental journeys in line.

Eisenstein, the newcomer, the enthusiast, has tried to make the most of a beauty and a glory that are rarely matched elsewhere on the face of the globe. As his work progressed his story developed and he made the discovery that served as a thread upon which he has hung his episodes.

This discovery, namely, Eisenstein's recognition of the importance of woman's position in that country as in no other in the world, converted his film from a dimensionalized fresco to the presentation of a sociological problem as old itself as Mexico and as important as its breath of life. In reality, woman makes no appearance in the film except in a few secluded instances. But her influence is as subtle as the Indian's overconquest and swallowing-up of his Spanish conqueror.

The peon is ruled by his wife, the soldier goes to war but refuses to fight unless his wife is with him. There particularly is woman important, for sometimes she is the advance guard, going forward to prepare a town for the force's comfort, sometimes, when there is fighting, bringing up the rear with consolation and ministering presence.

Mexico City politicians are frequently judged by their mistresses. It is common practise there to have both wife and mistress, one with a complete knowledge of the other.

In Tehuantepec the woman is absolute, not only ruling, but doing the heavy work as well, while the husband dozes at home, happy for the first time to be unlashd from the fetters of responsibility.

With the female's importance in mind and the physical beauty of the country to consider on the other hand, a beauty bewildering in its variety, ranging from tropical to frigid country, Eisenstein had to combine the elements into a whole that would appeal in subject matter as well as pictorial beauty. Eisenstein's secret is his universality—his appeal to the man in the street as well as the man of letters.

He therefore divided his picture into five irregular parts. The fifth and last episode will also serve as an epilogue. There is a prologue as well. All this will be included in a single film of 9 or 10 reels.

The first part he may call "*Tehuantepec: Paradise*." It is here, a tropical province of cocoanut palms, verdant fields, and easy living, that woman is absolute. She tills the fields, barter in the market place and rules the home. Her husband is a procreative force and no more.

The matchless carriage of the Tehuantepec woman, together with her beauty of form, due to the heavy objects she has carried on her head for generations, is a pictorial poem in itself. A supple body with strong conical breasts and a straightness of limb ascribed only to the ancients. Such characters pervade the reels.

The second episode is "*Maguey*." In it Eisenstein has stressed man's supremacy, but indicated his reliance upon his female counterpart. The entire sequence oc-

curs on a farm which in virility of landscape is in complete contrast with that of the preceding chapter. Here a phallic symbolism is engaged to emphasize the complete *masculinity* of the terrain. He accents the stem of the maguey, the upright stripes of the peon's zarape (the shawl-overcoat-blanket of the native), the unmistakable masculine strength of the land where a living is wrested by force only.

With the maguey plant, which sometimes rises to ten foot heights, as a thematic runner, his drama is enacted against a background of twin volcanos. The cruel charros, attired in their silver-bangled vests, swinging henaquen lassoes, ride their prancing mounts over the head of the boy who has been planted alive, chin deep, on a flat-topped mound.

The third part may be called "*Romance*," the lull before the storm. In this part Eisenstein's satirical thrusts will penetrate and puncture a pretty affair about a bull fighter and his love for another man's wife. It is the interlude in preparation for the ensuing drama which is a turgid, seething account of revolution—all revolution,—not alone of Mexico, but extending through the ages in which man has arisen from his stocks to brandish the torch. It is laid in Mexico, but its import is much more universal.

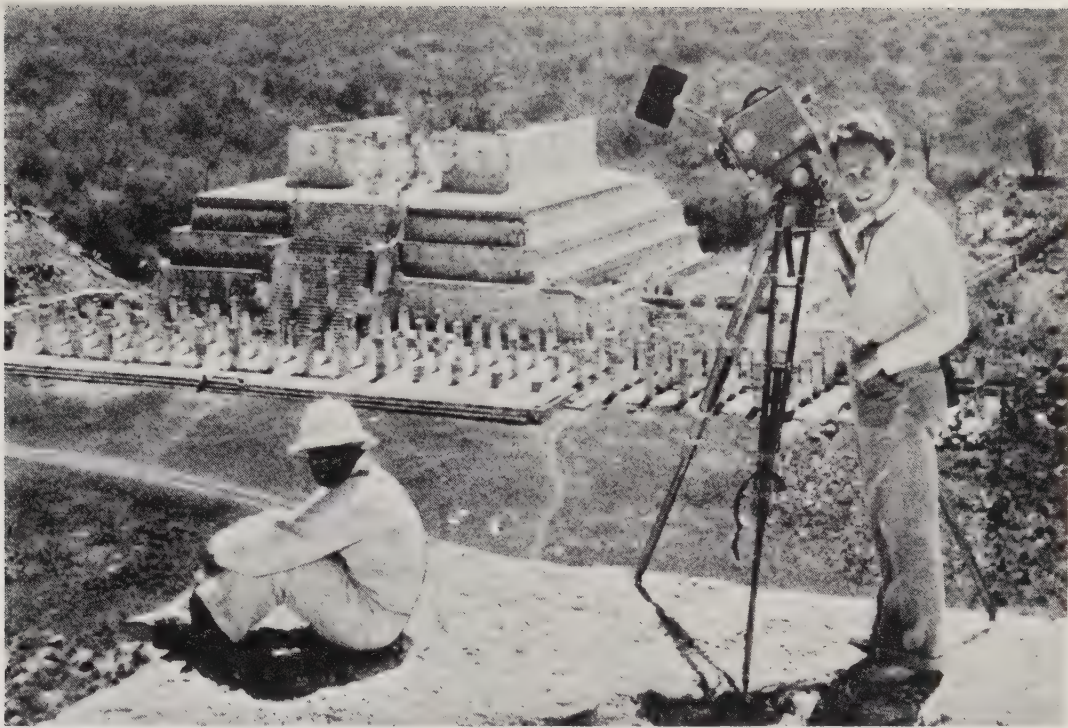
And following this is a promise of a perfect Mexico—one without strife, want, incipient bloodshed. This is a sort of liqueur. You take it or leave it. You can always ignore the dessert.

Whether purposely or not, Eisenstein has so completely covered Mexico that it will be difficult for another picture-director to enter the country and make a scene without repeating. The locales are so varied as to permit any form of life and existence and, taking full advantage, the Russian runs the gamut. Mexico harbors romance and glamor, and cruelty and privation. There are tropics, mountains, deserts, jungles. The director has traversed it from one section to another. All this is in the picture, pieced together, as only Eisenstein can do it.

This man with two others, one of whom grinds a simple camera, has completely thrown off the fetters of the Hollywood system of picture-making, and has exploited Mexico thoroughly in a manner never done before, having been aided on all sides because this time the exploitation is all to Mexico's advantage.

Comparative working costs are interesting to note. The day's work at Los Remedios cost but very few dollars. His equipment consisted of a 400-foot load French-made camera, two gilded reflectors and five actors, each earning one peso (38 cents at the current rate). Transportation cost a few more pesos. Add to this the incidental developing, printing and negative costs together with the cutting and final duplication, and the sum total is surprisingly small. Naturally, there are days when hundreds of persons will be engaged for scenes and the costs soar accordingly, but for the most part the expenses are negligible.

In Hollywood the same business would have entailed transportation for the stars and directors; two or three cameras, artificial illumination if necessary, overhead at the studio that covers a multitude of such sins as publicity, props, advertising, costumes, etc., etc. Somebody's system is basically at fault.



S. M. Eisenstein and G. V. Alexandrov on the ruins of Chichenita, in Yucatan, Mexico. (1931)

Eisenstein and Tisse preparing a shot on the Pyramids of Teotihuacan, Mexico.



*On the Hacienda Tetlapayac:
Work hymn of the Mexican
workers. Daily ceremony
at dawn.*



Eisenstein says that the cinema is the representative art of today as painting was of yesterday. He has already buried painting. He explains the growth in attendance at art exhibits as a result of publicity and additional newspapers devoting more space to them, and not as a manifestation of a naturally stimulated life. He says he knows how to do nothing but work at motion pictures.

But he forgets for the moment the monastic seclusion into which he retires on occasion to work on his volume of esthetics which will devote a sufficient amount of space to the heretofore sorrowfully neglected cinema.

He also forgets his interest in mathematics (that day as Los Remedios when he had to wait ten minutes for something, he drew out of his pocket a paper-backed Russian volume on higher mathematics and in a moment was lost in its intricacies, while perched in the cabin of a truck). He forgets the papers he writes tirelessly for every advanced journal on the cinema, mostly free. The cinema may be his profession, but his

high, broad forehead sees beyond its technical limitations into a meaning that may exploit or advance life, the living, the helpless. Directing a scene, turning a crank, cutting a film, he considers but the cog in a huge wheel that is beginning to turn with tremendous speed.

Eisenstein may return to the Soviet Union next month (March) with his comrades, Alexandrov and Tisse, to film a document in celebration of the fifteenth Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Que Viva Mexico! may or may not stir an eddy of interest. Because of the flooded book marts that sag with volumes on tourist Mexico, there is a tremendous curiosity about the country. Even now everyone there is planning for the influx of Americans tired of the transatlantic crossing. Because of a universal undercurrent of unrest, the message of the film may stir a reaction. Because of its pictorial beauty it will be something to look at. Because of its mature outlook it will merit serious consideration. Who knows what it may do for Mexico?

BELA BELAZS

Translated for "Experimental Cinema" from the Soviet Newspaper, "Kino", by Alexander Brailovsky

LET'S ORGANIZE AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDIO FOR SOUND FILMS!

To produce a sound film it is necessary to study in a systematic manner all the new forms and possibilities of the dynamic effect of the sound film on the audience, and to put to practical use all such possibilities as basic material for the production of a concrete dramatic picture.

Every experimental film of this kind (100-150 meters) should have for its purpose to employ fully all variations and possibilities of a given effect and to apply all laws of correlation between the sound and the image in connection with the story written specifically with this purpose in view.

Such a short-reel film should bear "play-film" title, and only in a sub-title should *its technical purpose be indicated* (e.g., the testing of some definite sound variations).

In the first short-reel series of experimental "play-films"* we should develop the peculiar fields of specific sound-cinema effects.

1. The increase and decrease of tone-volume.
2. The correlation between the volume of the sound and the sharpness of the image. The parallel increase and decrease of the sound and the image (the increase of intensity)—or the comic effect of the opposite ac-

tion—a suddenly interrupted sound in connection with the increased action on the screen.

3. Parallel or syncopated movement in the rhythm of the picture and the rhythm of the sound. The musical rhythm as a preliminary allusion to the incipient intrinsic movement. The dramatic accent of a rest (pause) and silence.

4. Correlation between the character of an image and the tonality—Is it possible to perceive the subject of a picture by its musical accompaniment?—The employing, as the picture goes on, of all possible sound variations.—"What do you hear now?" (The identification of the sound with its source). (The world of near-sighted and blind people.)

5. The unity of a sound picture. Association of definite events with definite noises or music. Symbolism of the sound.

6. Association of images with music. The awakening of the perception of an image through music. The cinematographic accompaniment to a given music work.

7. The correlation between music and minds in nature.

8. The sound montage as musical shaping of noises.

9. Sound synchronization of silent pictures.

10. The simultaneous perception by the audience of the image on the screen and of sounds and the text, as though it is spoken from behind the stage.

11. Fantastic and grotesque sound. The distortion of real sound in memory and in imagination.

* Translator's note: By "play-film," in contradistinction to "documentary film," in Soviet Cinematography, is understood a film made from an especially prepared scenario, according to the story written for it, and played by actors, instead of being shot from real life-events (as Vertov's group is doing).

HOLLYWOOD: SALES AGENT OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

EDITORS' NOTE: *In presenting this article by our Cuban correspondent, we feel that we are privileged to afford the readers of **Experimental Cinema** with a document whose importance to the study of film-culture cannot be overestimated. Here is genuine analysis applied both to the cinema in its role as an agent of American imperialism and to the political tragedy of the peoples of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and other American "colonies."*

"We have given Cuba industry, but are the Cubans free?"

Leland H. Jenks,
OUR CUBAN COLONY

"In Monroe's time the only way to take a part of South America was to take the land. Now finance has new ways of its own."

Walter Hinez Page

Of those "new ways" which American finance capital has now, Hollywood and its pictures are of great help by their power to form in the American people a wrong idea of the countries down by the Rio Grande as well as a perfect misconception of life among the peoples of Hispano-America.

The best exponent of those "new ways" is the so-called Republic of Cuba and I think that a brief historical digression, an exposition of the factors, the components of the Cuban social aggregate,—politico-economic source,—is necessary to clarify the present state of things and to emphasize the supremacy of Hollywood's pernicious influence on the social development of Cuba with particular reference to the peasants and proletarians.

In accordance with John Quincy Adams, the American statesmen have believed that Cuba "gravitates to the United States as an apple severed by the tempest gravitates to the ground." So, for 75 years they have looked for the chance of acquiring the island in one way or another.

The Cubans fought their way to liberty from 1850 to 1898. The first serious attempt was made from 1868 to 1878 in the Ten Years' War (*Guerra de los Diez Anos*). A strong class (Cuban bourgeoisie) formed by rural and sugar-mill owners (*hacendados*), rich lawyers, tobacco planters, farmers, realized at that time—the middle of the Nineteenth century—the necessity of setting free the productive forces developed in the womb of the colonial-political structure by breaking through this structure. In the dialectic process that class was the negation struggling against the positive, the affirmative, impersonated in the colony taxes, laws, slavery, preponderance of the Church, etc., etc.

Owing to various factors, the attempt failed, thus according with Hegel's postulate: "When the power to develop the contradiction and bring it to a head is lacking, the thing or the being is shattered in the con-

tradiction." (Hegel, *Science of Logic*). So, the Cuban bourgeoisie failed to realize its historical role.

However, rebel "colonos" that were not entirely defeated, managed to get from Spain, in the famous pact known as the "Zanjón Pact," the promise of putting into effect some reforms and concessions.

Then began a long period of intermittent "pour-parlers" between Spain and the U. S. A. One day the U. S. A. wanted to buy the island, and the next day they did not. One President seemed to be a good friend of Cuba, the next one raised a high tariff against Cuban products, most of which go to that neutral market. So the U. S. A. made the Cuban bourgeoisie and the people of Cuba understand that their lives were in the hands of the U. S. A.

They realized this at last, but in the wrong way. They thought that once they were free and not a colony of Spain, the North American Republic would change its policies. So they started a new war against Spain in 1895. In 1898 the *Maine* was blown up in "la Bahía de la Habana." The Americans,—and when I say "the Americans" I mean the political and financial captains,—found their chance! The American Congress passed a joint resolution claiming that "the people of Cuba are and of right ought to be independent" and that "the United States disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said Island of Cuba..."

This time the Cuban bourgeoisie completely failed to accomplish its nationalistic role, in accordance with the laws of historical determinism.

Thus, the United States entered into its second imperialistic war, disguised—as in 1916 and 1918—under the famous words: "justice," "humanity," "the right of the little countries," etc.

Three months later Spain was defeated and America acquired new territories. Porto Rico, the Philippine Islands and... Cuba. In 1902, after three years of intervention, they obliged the Cubans to sign the Platt Amendment and a commercial treaty adjunct to it and placed the government of the Island in the hands of the first president of the Republic of Cuba.

What a marvelous scheme! The finest, the wittiest ever imagined by an imperialistic government! A colony disguised as a Republic! Instead of Spain, it was now the United States who ruled. During the

past 30 years, American Capital, safeguarded by the Platt Amendment and under the privileges of the Commercial Treaty, has acquired,—the Great War and the 1920 crash accelerated the process,—the railroads, all public utilities, the banking and financial institutions, big mining enterprises, 80 percent of the sugar crop, 75 percent of the fertile soil, and very important commercial and real estate business, the racehorse track, the great Casino, etc., etc. . . .

So we have become an economic-political dependent of the United States, but we have a President of the Republic, a Senate, a House of Representatives which has diplomatic and consular representation all over the world . . . and a beautiful banner, a big red, white and blue triangle with a great white star in it, waving in the ocean breeze, shining in the sun, under a high tropical sky . . . These are the phrases which both the American and the Cuban politicians and financial magnates have used to the proletarians, peasants, artisans and petit bourgeoisie of Cuba.

The moving picture business could not be an exception in Cuba's economy, as it is in the hands of Hollywood producing companies who have representatives here. Some of them have their own theatres for the projection of their films. It can be said that a moving picture trust has been formed in Cuba by the American picture companies, which fixes the prices of the tickets, the size of advertisements in the newspapers, and which, in one way or another, boycotts the European and Soviet films.

So Cuba's population cannot see pictures other than the American and is therefore under the exclusive influence of Hollywood. Hollywood plays a great and two-edged part in the imperialistic scheme. By means of its pictures, Hollywood infects all other countries with the philistine, hypocritical, rotten American life-conception. At the same time, to the American masses, Hollywood presents the Latin American people as the lowest, most repulsive scoundrels on earth. A Latin, or Latin American, is always a traitor, a villain. Years ago, there was not a picture that was without a Spanish or Spanish-American villain. In *Strangers May Kiss*, they present a little Mexican town: the owner of the old "posada" (inn) is a drunkard and the "mozo" (servant, waiter) is a similar character; the streets with three feet of mud; countless beggars; licentious girls.

I remember, too, the picture, *Under the Texas Moon*, openly offensive to Mexican women, the projection of which in a movie-house in the Latin section of New York City provoked a terrible tumult. The tumult was caused by the enraged protest of a few Mexican and Cuban students, in which one of the former by the name of Gonzales was killed, and the Cubans, Gabriel Barcelo and Carlos Martinez, were sent to the Tombs.

In many cases these depictions are due to the encyclopedic ignorance of most of the film-directors of Hollywood. Such is the case with *The Cuban Love Song*, a stupid and absurd picture that will soon be finished in Hollywood, according to what Mr. Ernesto Lecuona has told a friend of mine. (Mr. Lecuona is a famous Cuban musician who went to Hollywood under contract to M-G-M to play in that picture.)

Such pictures are vulgar and grotesque, dull but full of the so-called "color" which so greatly pleases the "100 percent American,"—what a stupid, untrue designation, this expression, 100 percent American! For that type of man (hundred-percenter), all Spanish-American countries,—as well as Spain, I think,—are full of venal, lazy men and women of low mentality.

The best depiction I have read of that type of "American" is in John Reed's book *Daughter of the Revolution and Other Stories*. It is entitled *Mac-American*.

Hollywood, a docile and well-learned "servidor" of the American imperialists, reinforces those ideas by means of which the marines and soldiers will fight blindly against men they have never seen before and against whom they do not have any hatred, just as they had none in the Great War.

I do not know if there is an English translation of Hernan Robleto's book *Sangre en el Tropico*, (*Blood in the Tropics*), a vivid narration, highly lyrical, a mad cry from the Nicaraguan people, but it has not already been translated, it should be immediately, in if it has not already been translated, it should be translated immediately in order to make the American people understand for what purpose and in what manner the Nicaraguans really died at the bottom of the deep, green, beautiful valleys and on the craggy rocks of "la sierra."

The Cuban social aggregate cannot be considered as other than that of a colony. There is the proletariat class, which is not great, notwithstanding the intense rationalization of the sugar industry, mining and tobacco manufacture. This proletariat is far from having reached maturity and, with the exception of the few members of the clandestine Communist Party, the class-consciousness of the workers is weak, most of them ignoring the very reason, the material source, of their misery and terrible exploitation. As a consequence of this weakness on the part of the proletariat and because of the intensive white terror, the class-struggle is obscurely defined.

Two transition (or intermediary) classes, the *guajiros* (peasants) and the *artisans* form the very nerve of the Cuban population. The former are very numerous, working mostly in the American latifundio, planting, cultivating, cutting and hauling the sugar, in the tobacco factories and in the cultivation of the minor fruits. Few of these peasants are what we call "colonos,"—a kind of independent planter,—but, in any case, they are the slaves of the foreign *entrepreneurs*, working themselves to death, their families steeped in misery and poverty, for the benefit of the shareholders and boards of directors in New York and London.

The degree of illiteracy in those two classes as well as in the proletariat is very high. In that class and in the two sub-classes are great numbers of Negroes, to whom I shall make special reference later.

Numerous, too, is the middle class or petit-bourgeoisie,—bank clerks, sugar, mining, tobacco, public utilities, real estate, railroad employees, as well as the State, the provincial government and the municipality officers. At the top is an ambitious bourgeoisie, now ruined as a result of the drop in the price of sugar, but

in very friendly disposition toward and in close relationship with the American *entrepreneurs*, from whom they expect to receive high emoluments, advantages, privileges and business participations. To them, Americans are always prospective buyers of their over-valued properties.

The whole population of Cuba suffers drastically from the influence of Hollywood pictures, and even though I am chiefly interested,—as may be easily understood,—in the effect of these pictures on the proletariat and the two classes aforementioned, I think their influence on the petit-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie, deserves some consideration, although the former, and more especially the latter, are well satisfied with Hollywood films and do not accept other pictures for the simple reason that those made by Hollywood glorify the world in which they, snobs that they are, wish to live. Morally, economically, politically, they have been *deformed* by Hollywood and they do not tolerate even a German or a French picture.

The Cuban bourgeoisie know nothing about the new art movement all over the world. Romantic in their sentiments, they are likewise romantic in their artistic concepts and, as a consequence, they are highly conservative, suspecting in every artistic innovation a masked attack against the status quo in which, as exploiters, they are so comfortably entrenched.

To the girls and boys of the Cuban bourgeoisie, there is nothing so worthy of imitation as the boys and girls they see in the American films, and they want to shape their lives in conformity to the lives of motion picture heroes and heroines. From all this there arises the contradiction between a society that was almost patriarchal sixteen years ago and the new customs which the younger set, and even the adults, are trying to impose in matters of love, family relationships, etc. Then follow wild parties, “necking” orgies, licentiousness, miscomprehension of what “free love” really means, gross sensuality, lack of control of the lowest passions, and a narrow, American, utilitarian life-conception, an ardent paean to those who *win*, no matter how.

It is the beginning of that disintegrating process through which the bourgeoisie all over the world is passing in its final stages as a perishing class.

An art is what the dominant class wants it to be, because an art involves “men.” An art consists of the artists by whom it is accomplished or performed, and artists are what the productive relations make them under the pressure of those who possess the money and the power.

So, cinema art, like every other art in society, is a class matter based on the class struggle. The film is, therefore, a weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the proletariat for the conservation of the present relations of production and appropriation. And what a weapon the bourgeoisie and American imperialism have in the cinema! Even the weapon of religion in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church, embodied in the classical arts—painting, sculpture, architecture, and printing,—was not so effective, so efficient, as this new weapon, the vital art of our time.

Hollywood pictures are furiously individualistic. They exalt what the North Americans call “self-made

men,” the men who have always accomplished great success by themselves, as if in society (especially in a society so highly interrelated as modern capitalist society) things were like that.

For the American movies there is no such thing as the social problem. It is *taboo*, and even when the Hollywood producers make a picture with some social foundation, they distort it and pervert it, as in the case of *An American Tragedy*. Charles Chaplin himself, who, without question, has a social preoccupation, expresses it timidly, not being sufficiently courageous or able to face that problem squarely and develop it to its logical conclusion. Thus, in his films, the “little vagabond” has more “atmosphere” (social overtones) than the protagonist of the standard American picture,—for the latter there is no such thing as the environment or the social *milieu* and man acts as an independent subject,—but there is not a real attempt to present and analyze the inner source, the *social source*, of his condition and status as a lumpenproletariat.

In this connection, I refer the reader to Waldo Frank’s book *The Re-Discovery of America*, Chap XI, pp. 138 and 139. For different reasons,—without question,—both Charles Chaplin and the average American director do the same thing: evade the social problem.

What does Hollywood show to Cuban peasants and proletarians?

In the American film there is always a perfect understanding between Capital and Labor, between patron and worker, between master and wage-slave, the former (Capital) as well as the State (emanated from God) being like a tender, comprehending father. No mistake in this: if you are obedient and laborious, they (the bosses) will recognize it some day and “raise” you with a gracious gesture. If there is some cruelty or injustice in this “best of all possible worlds,”—oh, *Candide*!—then, at the end of the picture, with God’s will, everything is fixed and the good will get their recompense.

And the Cuban worker, who lives in very different conditions, with a low salary and high living costs, without liberty or the right to express his own class-convictions, let alone the natural human right to exist, poisoned with the slogans and lies of the American films, just as his brothers in the past were degraded by the Roman conformity and humility dogma, is supposed to hope that some day his country, under the capitalistic system, will be as “civilized” as the great North American Republic. And even more: the Cuban worker is supposed to feel gratitude to that Anglo-Saxon race, so “pure,” “strong” and “clean,” helping this ill-disciplined and sometimes revolutionary little nation to acquire honest political institutions, good finances, etc., etc. . . . (*Tell it to the Nicaraguans, to the Porto Rican slaves, to the people of Haiti, whom your marines persecuted and outraged—no matter what the American justification in pictures against Sandino and others.*)

We do not have, as in Mexico, Peru and Chile, the problem of the tremendous masses of Indians, and the racial problem does not exist in Cuba, at least not like in the United States. The first act of the Cuban

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CINE-ANALYSIS

As a basis for my work on a "cine-piece," I apply the analytical method which, as a result of the analysis of my experience, has gradually crystallized into an ever clearer and more distinctly outlined method of film-treatment.

The orientation towards the "cine-language," as the richest, the most rational and the most comprehensible means of expression—is unconditionally correct. My conviction in this has been strengthened and confirmed by my latest work on the film, *Spring*.

This film, expressed entirely in the pure cine-idiom, without resorting to the aid of literary explanations (titles)—proved to be one easily understood by the masses.

What does "cine-language" mean?

What does "cine-A B. C" mean?

Leaving aside the existing literary alphabet, —what must be considered as a single "cine-letter," "cine-word," "cine-sentence," "cine-piece"?

To answer this it is necessary first of all to investigate whether it is possible to draw a parallel between the language of literature and the language of the cinema.

A letter, a word, a sentence, as the elements of literary expression, are conventionally accepted conceptions and, therefore, they are comprehensible to a literate person only, while every frame of a film speaks in the most concrete way, giving the reproduction of the life-phenomena among which an individual is being brought up. Thus the elements of cine-expression are understood even by an illiterate.

A cine-element gives at once both the definition and the object; it speaks at one and the same time about the form, the quality, the dynamic and the whole series of other categories, which in literature would require an extensive narrative.

It is possible to draw partially a parallel between "cine-language" and the "language of music (provided it is possible to speak at all of the 'language' of music) as far as, for instance, rhythm and tempo are concerned.

The closest analogy to the work on the creation of a "cine-piece" is afforded by the work of an engineer or a chemist.

The only difference is that an engineer or a chemist knows beforehand the material which he will use in his constructions. An engineer can estimate exactly the necessary building material and can foresee its qualities and functions. A chemist can in advance take into account the elements necessary for the composition of this or that body.

But in obtaining the material for a "cine-piece," the elements which will be used as its building material can be pre-estimated only in a very limited way. In other words, the presence of concrete elements can not be guaranteed. Instead, there is a very extensive choice of elements of cine-expressions, which can be used functionally for a single given case.

The last condition neutralizes the impossibility to pre-estimate the concrete material and to provide oneself with it in a definite way. The obtaining of material out of which a cine-piece will be constructed, and the very work of construction—this, I consider as primary analysis, secondary analysis,—plus synthesis. In other words, I consider the analytical investigation as the fundamental, basic work.

I use my own eyes for preliminary orientation ("pre-shooting"); then I introduce a camera, as an apparatus of more perfect vision, possessing the faculty of fixation.

The second stage of the primary analysis is "the shooting," i.e., the attack with the camera upon the settings, selected by "pre-shooting," for the purpose of their further analysis and fixation. Thus, the preliminary analysis has two stages of work; pre-shooting and shooting.

Pre-shooting serves first, for the selection from the entire sum of phenomena of those necessary for the given case; secondly, for the decomposition of phenomena into basic ones, derivative ones, etc.

Phenomena, analyzed in such a way, provide already the material for the last stage of the work of shooting,—the fixation. The path of fixation is determined firstly, by the purpose for which the analysis has been made and the results of the analysis—the characteristics of the phenomena subject to fixation, the milieu, in which they take their place and their individual features.

By "milieu" I mean: conditions of illumination, the general background, the separate phenomena which form the background, the influence and the action of the surrounding phenomena upon the phenomenon-subject to be fixed.

The individual qualities of the phenomena are: the *structure, color, character of surface, size*, the "usualness" or "rareness" of phenomena, if its nature is *animate* or *inanimate*, *dynamic* or *static*, its *adaptability* or *unadaptability* to the action of the camera. The first stage of primary analysis, the "pre-shooting," determines the group to which the phenomenon belongs. The moment one introduces the camera into a definite milieu—one has to be fully prepared in order to fix the maximum quantity of moments necessary for the snapping of the given subject,—even those moments which have been somehow overlooked in the pre-shooting.

By shooting we carry the dissection of the phenomena further into its composite elements and we fix them—in one way or another, according to the thematic orientation or the organization of material decided upon previously.

In order to show in a clearer manner how theoretical principles are applied in practice, I am going to give a few instances from my film, *Spring*.

Commemoration for the dead at the cemetery.

(Ceremonial dinner traditionally given in old Russia by the relatives of the dead right after the funeral.—*Trans. Note.*)

The pre-shooting gives:

1. The priests prowling about the cemetery.
2. One of them is hired for the funeral services.
3. The funeral service.
4. Paying the priest.
5. Passing the bottle (booze).
5. Having a bite to eat after.
7. Drunken carouse.
8. The brawl.

Now the pre-shooting is over. Let us take up the fixation and consider a few moments of it:

"Priests prowling about the cemetery."

Analyzing this I find that:

1. The shooting is necessarily done from a position of hiding—as the phenomenon is suitable for camera treatment.

2. The "prowling priest" must be perceived by the audience as a fast-moving, dynamic phenomenon.

3. The taking should be done against the most striking background, or against the background which would aid most in the "theme-feeling."

The first problem is solved by the long shot from the hiding-place. The second—by the pan-shot with the fixation of the passing-by priest always at the center of the frame.

This way of using the long-focussed optic gives the best illusion of the shooting of the movement, i.e., gives the best angle of observation of the phenomenon in motion. The same method solves in this particular case the third problem—to outline sharply the observed phenomenon upon the ever narrowing background, and it even creates the stereoscopic illusion.

"The funeral service."

A considerably extensive observation of the phenomenon has led me to the conclusion that it has a finished scheme—from the beginning to the end.

This scheme is not perceived by us because its separate moments are scattered in time farther from each other than could be grasped by our visual memory. For the very same reason we do not see the movement of the hand of the clock on the dial, nor the slow processes of destruction, e.g., the gradual disruption of rocks by the action of the winds, landslides, etc. The slowed-down shooting reduces distance between separate moments of the slow-moving process and thus discloses its dynamic scheme and even deciphers its laws.

In modern city and street-planning, the laws governing the movement of liquids are being taken into account. In narrow passages, at the maximum aggregation of pedestrians and vehicles—current decreases; at the outlets—the current increases.

At one of the October celebrations I had the occasion to take, by a slowed-down camera, the passing of the procession. The accelerated movement obtained gave the scheme of the movement of a human stream.

In the film, *Spring*, I caught the long, slow-moving funeral service by slowed-down shooting, and thus could obtain the scheme of a small selection of the puppet-show,—which presents the religious rites in general.

In this case the camera helped to investigate a life-

phenomenon by means of mechanically assisted vision, as a microscope discloses to us phenomena unseen by the unaided eye.

In this synoptical exposition I have pointed out only the most outstanding methods, which give an idea of the analytical approach to the use of camera-possibilities: rapid shooting, assisting our eye for the analysis of fast-moving phenomena; shooting from points inaccessible or accessible with difficulty to the unaided eye; the dissection of the general appearance of the phenomenon and the fixation by close-ups of its constructive elements; further dissection of the phenomena and the fixation by the macro-shooting, micro-shooting, tele-shooting, etc.

Such are the analytical possibilities which are offered by the cine-camera.

As a result, we have on our montage shelves the material for the future film,—still not entirely dissected into its elements, still with predomination of the complexed phenomena, subject to further analysis. One should not forget that "an element" is not a constructive quantity or conception.

Our estimation of a given portion of the material, as an element of a film, depends upon our thematic purpose and the form of cine-expression which we pre-establish.

Thus, we come to the secondary analysis, i.e., the analysis of the material obtained. Properly speaking, the process of analysis goes on uninterruptedly. I make a distinction between the primary and the secondary analysis only, according to the character of working processes. It would, therefore, be erroneous to think that the work of discovery of cine-language is limited by the primary analysis only.

In fact, by the primary analysis we obtained only raw material—half-manufactured stuff,—but there is contained in this raw material the maximum of elements needed by us.

Now, what does the element of the secondary analysis mean?

What was considered an element in the primary analysis is only raw material in the secondary one.

Thus the study of life-phenomena becomes a planned, ever-deepening research. Now, what is the depth, what are the limits of the secondary analysis?

Everything is clear and comprehensible in the primary analysis, both in pre-shooting and in the shooting: out of the total sum of phenomena we select those which are thematically necessary; we study their details; we dissect them into the elements they are made of, as far as possibilities of tele-, macro-, and micro-shooting permit.

What further analysis could be possible, then?

It seems as though it is possible to speak only of the classifying of elements of the primary analysis, and of their thematic "concatenation," according to Pudovkin's formula, or of their "conflict," according to Eisenstein.

Let us consider the classified material.

We take from the montage box a Section A. All frames of this piece are alike as to composition and content. Now let's take another piece, B; while studying the frames of this section, we see that every frame is different from its neighbor's, because the primary analysis in this case has fixed a dynamic phenomenon

and the very dissimilarity of the separate frames determines the cinematic nature of Section B.

If we consider a single frame as an element, we shall have a series of similar elements in A, while B consists of series of dissimilar elements.

In the synthesis, i.e., in the construction of a sentence, if we use A, we may take the necessary number of frames from each end. But in order to use B, we need first to analyze it, because it consists of series of elements of a movement, of intermediary points and the points of culmination. There is no cine-language without taking into account such elements.

A few instances from the film, *Spring*. As a result of the primary analysis, I obtained a series of sections representing the football game.

After having classified the material, i.e., sorted into groups the functionally similar pieces, we obtain:

Group 1. Goal-keeper's work.

Group 2. The foot strikes the ball.

Group 3. Reaction on the faces.

Let us take and analyze a piece of group 1. This piece contains a static moment: a goal-keeper on watch.

A defensive move

The receiving of the ball

Thus the piece of group 1, while being an element in the primary analysis, gives a series of new elements in the secondary analysis.

We do similar work on a piece of group 2. We obtain:

A man runs toward the ball

Strikes the ball

The inertia of the player

Let us suppose that for our purpose, a study of football needs no further analysis of these two groups.

Now we take up group 3—the men's faces reacting to the game.

In every piece of this group we find a series of elements which are functionally different. Some of them correspond to the reaction to the hitting of the goal by the ball, some react to the foul hit, some express anxiety, some tensivity of waiting, etc.

When we consider the elements obtained, we shall have still shorter slices, i.e., pieces consisting of a very small number of frames, but, in recompense, more saturated.

In the montage of the film, *Spring*, I carried the analysis of these slices still further, and obtained a culmination point—a frame yielding the *maximum* for the characterization of a given reaction. By multiplication of the frame, I obtain statics—in a maximum of dynamics.

In the other part of the same film I show the Easter holidays as a feast of gluttony and boozing.

One of the elements obtained by the primary analysis:

A woman drinking vodka

The secondary analysis gives a new series of elements:

The woman brings the glass into her mouth

She drinks

With a jerk she brings the glass away from her mouth

The distorted features expressing reaction to the bitter taste of vodka

Thus we dissected a piece into a series of separate moments and every moment is taken into account as an element of the future film-structure.

But we are not at the end yet.

Let us carry on the study of elements obtained. We see a series of frames—and almost every one could serve as an independent montage-element.

In our case I used the culmination points of the elements obtained by the secondary analysis—by the multiplication of a frame.

Due to that, we have disclosed the instinctive resistance of the organism to the poison.

This method is, in fact, a way of scientific analysis. In the primary analysis it is analogous to slowed-down shooting, rapid shooting, macro- and micro-shooting.

I have applied this method for the first time in the film, *Moscow*, to the theme: "Moscow taking a rest." At the climax of merrymaking I use the culmination-frame as an element; by the multiplication of a single frame as an element; by the multiplication of a single point.

The film, *Spring*, contains many moments built upon such a multiplication of a frame. At the end of part 5, I give the extract of *laughter*,—through culmination-frames I obtain the montage of a cine-laugh, "cine-guffaw."

One would think that having come to a single frame, we have reached the most simple element of cine-language. But analyzing the frame itself, studying its constituent elements, we often find elements necessary for the building of a given cine-sentence. How are such elements obtained? Mostly by the extensive use in photography of the enlarging from the negative of part of a shot.

By the same means, in the secondary analysis we can decompose a single frame into constituent elements.

Thus—after having investigated the material by the primary analysis, after having decomposed it into elements by the secondary analysis,—we can take up the synthesis:

the construction of a cine-piece.

"THE NEW REPUBLIC" ON "THE ROAD TO LIFE"

"... in spite of these faults, and half a dozen others, I would rather see this picture than the slickest society drama that ever came out of Hollywood. The Russian films take you somewhere; they rouse your anger or enthusiasm; they get something done."

—Malcolm Cowley in *The New Republic*
of February 10, 1932.

A FEW REMARKS ON THE ELEMENTS OF CINE-LANGUAGE

Experimental Cinema has asked me to clarify certain ideas and terminology propounded in M. Kaufman's article. While agreeing to do this, I wish to emphasize that I take full responsibility for the interpretation of M. Kaufman's ideas and if my interpretation is wrong—the fault is entirely mine.—A.B.

1.

Suppose you read the word "horse." As a means of literary expression it is only an abstract and very general symbol. It is left to your imagination to decide upon a whole series of qualifications of a "horse." It might be a big horse, small, harness, race, young, old, with a fluffy tail, or tail-less, Arab stallion or French percheron, or a Russian, half-starved peasant "seevka." Now, when you see the horse on the screen, all these qualifications are given to you at once and immediately in a *visual image*. Let's call this visual image a "cine-word." We see that to render adequately just a single "cine-word" by the means of written words—we should need a page of description.

On the other hand, suppose you read a word "war." It is perhaps impossible to render it by a single image: we need a series of images, the sum of which suggests to us the idea of a "war."

So "cine-language" has its own nature, different from literary language. Now to continue.

2.

What is a single "cine-letter"? Again we resort to the analogy with the written letter. I write a single letter "m." It hardly has any meaning by itself. Taken by itself, it is only a mere phonetic symbol. It acquires meaning only in definite connection with other letters. It might be a part of a word "mother," or "miner," or "mushroom," or "bum," or "Omaha," or "Potemkin," etc., etc.

Accordingly, an isolated elementary image has no cinematographic "meaning." Suppose I see an image of "a bottle." Only in connection with other images do I perceive whether it is a bottle of whiskey, confiscated by prohibition agents,—or a bottle thrown into the ocean by people from a drowning boat, containing important information,—or a bottle as a weapon in a drunken brawl of sailors in a Shanghai saloon, etc.

The same as a word "Potemkin" cannot be written without an "m,"—so a certain situation cannot be expressed through images without presenting the image of a "bottle."

Let us call such a single image a "cine-letter."

3.

Now, suppose you want to express cinematographically the following *literary sentence*: "Ivan's childhood passed in a family of a poor shoemaker, with a drunkard father, while his mother was a timid, God-fearing woman." The series of correspondent concrete *visual*

images—let us call them a *cine-sentence*. "Taking up the foregoing example: To a single literary word "War" on the screen would correspond to a whole "cine-sentence."

"words, words, words" . . .), their disposition in a sentence—they rhythmical flow—their recurrence or vice-versa—expressions of the same idea by different words,—in short, a manipulation of *words*, as material, is what we call a literary manner, or style, (chool, etc.). The analogical choice, disposition, rhythmical outline, manipulation of elementary single visual *images*, "cine-words" (or mechanically speaking, certain sets of frames or, as Kaufman suggests, even *parts* of a frame)—is the *montage*, (or mechanically speaking, "cutting").

4.

Of course, the above is only the first approximation. Styles, as the most synthetic characteristic of the art of certain epochs, have always been the expression of the psychology, and, in particular, of the ideology of definite social groups. This refers to the cinema and its montage-style. The relation of the style to the social class is a problem passionately discussed in present Soviet film-literature. In the Soviet Union it is not a problem of pure theory. The Soviet cinematographers are trying to discover the constituent elements of a proletarian style in the art of the film. The treatment of the problem in this sense is outside the purely technical article of Kaufman.

Kaufman's article discusses only visual "silent" films. The advent of sound, or spoken word, brings, of course, additional elements to the problem.

5.

Micro-, macro-, tele-shooting, etc., . . . Kaufman calls the camera "an apparatus of more perfect vision".

It is true, but with the following reservations: our vision is stereoscopic, camera gives us rather flat images, perceived at two slightly different angles—wherefrom the feeling of "depth." But camera has a single eye. A man, one-eyed from birth will be probably more satisfied with our present flat screen "images" than people with normal vision. In this sense our natural vision is perhaps more perfect than a mechanical eye.

With this reservation, a camera eye, a lense, *is* more perfect apparatus of vision. Furthermore, different systems of lenses add to our natural eye artificial "eyes" of tremendous power: microscope, telescope. Artificial eyes see—and through them a sensitive plate could be fix—extremely small details and processes (life of microbes), as well as cosmically extremely distant objects. The adaptation of microscopic or telescopic lenses is an immensely enriching reinforcement of our visual imagery. They open a new world of "cine-letters" and "cine-words." They enable us to "shoot" what is going on on the summit of a mountain, to "shoot" from



In the country of the magueys



*Girl from the Isthmus
of Tehuantepec*



Two production-stills showing Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse at work on "QUE VIVA MEXICO!" The upper still shows Eisenstein looking into the finder to gauge an angle close-up of a Mexican woman. The lower still shows the S. M. Eisenstein Collective Production company at work. Eisenstein, in the mackinaw jacket, is directing. Next to him, with hand upraised, is Agustin Aragon Leiva, special Mexican assistant to Eisenstein, translating into Spanish instructions given by Eisenstein in French and English. Tisse is the "gypsy" at the camera. Alexandrov can be seen kneeling beside him. The man with the big hat is the Mexican charro, Melesio Abelar, who, when he is not holding reflectors, plays the "bad man" of the episode. Under the fire-works bull is Martin Hernandez. No artificial lighting was used in any of the scenes of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!"



Angle close-up from the sequence of the bull-fight in the episode called "Romance."

PHOTO BY
ALEXANDROV.



HOLLYWOOD FILMS AND THE WORKING CLASS

Millions of workers in the United States go to the picture theatres every week. The films shown at these theatres are turned out by half a dozen gigantic industries which are owned and controlled by the bourgeois class. This class sees to it that American films reflect only capitalist "ideals"—ideals of business, of imperialism, of morality, of racial and national superiority.

Although the workers and their families constitute almost nine-tenths of the audiences at the picture theatres, the American cinema does not concern itself with their life and problems. Economic exploitation, unemployment, the class war—all subjects of vital importance to the intelligent worker—are rigorously excluded from the American screen. In this country, films are made to lull the working class into a state of mental vacuity, to take their minds from the dreary realities of every-day life. For a worker whose thoughts are occupied with the screen amours of Greta Garbo, or with the fascinating dramatic intricacies of *Should Wives Tell?* or *Where's Your Husband?* or *Girls Demand Excitement*—such a worker is not likely to become a victim of radical propaganda, or a militant fighter for a new civilization.

What does the American worker see when he goes to a picture show? The sex revels of the "upper" class; anatomical details of leading ladies; palatial dwellings inhabited by parasites who never work; gigolos, pimps, prostitutes; animated fashion-plates, both male and female; gangster warfare, with the goodlooking gangster ultimately reforming by becoming a respectable business man and marrying his employer's daughter; the life and adventures of a young widow who is left a million dollars, and who is bored with everything until she meets the right man—and so on, to the point of driving imbecility.

In connection with the feature picture, the worker also sees news-reels of the *Pride of the Navy*, the latest army equipment, commercialized sports, and the sweet face of some notorious political crook. He never sees a bread-line, or a strike. He never sees a whole family of starved working people thrown into the streets. He never sees the merciless exploitation of the masses of workers and farmers. He never sees the lynching of a Negro worker. He never sees a militant demonstration of his class and the sickening brutality of capitalism's cossacks—the police. If such films are ever made, they are never released.

The ruling class of ancient Rome, when their power was threatened by proletarian uprisings, appeased their slaves by providing them with free bread and circuses—*panem et circenses*. The American ruling class provide their wage-slaves with the mediocrity and filth that emanate from Hollywood. But there is this difference: our modern slaves pay for their own debasement.

The Russian film is a glorious contrast. Russia is the only country where films are made of the very sub-

stance of life. There is no romanticising, no glossing over the facts of daily existence. The cinema industry of the Soviet Union is owned and controlled by the workers themselves, as are all other enterprises of the country. The Soviet film is looked upon as a powerful medium for culture and progress. It deals with the vital problems of the toiling masses, with science, hygiene, collectivization, the housing problem, the Five-Year Plan, with the Revolution, the class-war. In the Soviet Union films are not used as a soporific to dull the workers' minds, but rather to stimulate them to renewed effort and achievement, for the purpose of raising their own standard of life. They are shown in factories, on farms, in schools and theatres, wherever workers or their children gather.

The cultural film of Soviet Russia is totally different from the purely commercial film of America. The Russian workers, who control the film output, are tremendously interested in creating and disseminating things worthwhile, because they know that they themselves will immediately benefit therefrom. Nothing is too good for them. In addition to satisfying their economic requirements, they want the best in art, literature, the drama and the cinema. Bolshevik Russia is the only country on earth that has an *artistic* censorship. And it is the literate worker himself who is his own censor. Moscow is the only city which has a film university, where students must study for several years every possible aspect of cinematographic production before they are permitted to engage in any important film activity, such as photography, writing or directing.

In America the artistic quality of a picture, its fidelity to life, is a mere secondary consideration, if, indeed, it is any consideration at all. The commercial nature of the American film is only too obvious from the moment the scenario is written and accepted to the moment the finished product is released for universal consumption. Artistic integrity means nothing to the average American director. It is merely a question of box-office. In fact, the overwhelming majority of American directors, whose pathetic duty it is to turn out Hollywood masterpieces, are altogether unaware of the almost limitless potentialities of their own medium. Many of them are essentially illiterate men, who have been elevated to their positions because of kinship or "pull" and not because they have shown any genuine aptitude for their profession. They have not the slightest conception of rhythm, montage, photographic and dramatic values, or of any of the basic ingredients of good film-technique. And behind the directors stand the supervisors and general managers—*ci-devant* pants-pressers and nickelodeon proprietors, who are profoundly moved by only one thing: the acquisition of sizeable fortunes. And then behind the supervisors and general managers, stands the sinister power of entrenched privilege—the bankers, the financiers, the successful racketeers

TOWARD A WORKERS' CINEMA IN ENGLAND

The Merseyside Workers' Film Society

Nearly two years ago a conference of socialist teachers decided to show, during the course of their meetings at Birkenhead, a film called *A Journey to Soviet Russia*. The film was banned on some pretext by the local authorities and it was never shown. But the teachers called their friends and neighbors and out of their protest grew the Merseyside Workers' Film Society.

Only those who have some knowledge of the hostility on the part of the English authorities to films, to Russia, and to workers, can realize what difficulties the Society struggles against and with what pride it now points to its achievements over the past two seasons. These include the gathering together of a membership of some 500 people, the holding of 15 performances at monthly intervals at a charge of ten shillings for a season's membership, and the showing of all the great *Soviet* films, whether banned or not, with the exception of *Ten Days That Shook the World*.

It is only quite recently that Soviet films have been finding their way into England and getting past the Censorship, and even yet *Potemkin* remains banned and has never been publicly shown. It was a great triumph for Merseyside when our first banned film—*New Babylon*—ran through the projector and when *Potemkin* itself was put on in a crowded hall. Russian films, German films, any films of intelligence have extreme difficulty in getting through to the public in England. If they negotiate the Censor successfully they have still to face the neglect of the renters. So that for the ordinary person there is positively no chance of seeing such masterpieces as *Earth*, *The General Line*, *Storm Over Asia*, except in the private societies. And private societies—especially when they included the word "workers" in their name—are faced with almost insurmountable difficulties.

In England, power over film-shows rests with the local authorities. The Censor has no official standing, though in practice his word is law. But local authorities may override his decisions and private societies can sometimes persuade their local magistrates to sanction a private performance. But here the chief of the

of our modern world, who dictate all ultimate policies.

The Soviet film is frankly "propaganda"—propaganda against ignorance and superstition, against capitalism and wage-slavery, propaganda for the better life, for Communism. The American film is also "propaganda"—propaganda for ignorance and superstition, for vulgarity and moral degradation—in short, propaganda for capitalism. Unlike our films, the Soviet cinema is made to educate the workers, to make them aware of their historic mission in creating the society of the future—the Soviet Union of the World. And this educative intent is more than a vague aspiration. For *Storm Over Asia*, *Old and New*, *Potemkin*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Soil*, *China Express*, and many other Soviet films are enduring monuments of the new proletarian culture.

local fire-brigade steps in. Unless the building in which the film is shown complies with very stringent fire-regulations, no film-shows are allowed. And since normally the only buildings which do so comply are commercial movie-houses, our Society must hire one. But the only day on which a cinema is free for private use is a Sunday, and here the law steps in with a Seventeenth Century act and forbids Sunday performances! Apart from fire-regulations, authorities have little control over films, but these regulations are sufficient to enable a political censorship to be exercised.

Merseyside has been lucky. Liverpool possesses two halls which satisfy the fire-brigade, but are not licensed cinemas. Here is a loop-hole, and here the films have been shown, badly and uncomfortably it is true, with a single projector with its waits between reels, with a screen which gets itself into pleats, with hard seats on a level floor—but what odds a few drawbacks?

The adventures of the early days are worth recalling. After two shows an avalanche descended—the films had been *Two Days* and *Turk-Sib*. The hall—a theatre run by the University Settlement—refused permission for further performances; the press conducted a campaign against what they called the subversive character of the society, and the secretary was forced to resign by his employers. Then came a show in a cinema closed for a few days while talkies were installed, and then an application to the magistrates for Sunday performances—refused, of course. Permission to use a hall belonging to the city was sought and refused, but at last fortune, in the shape of the local Co-operative Society, smiled and produced the uncomfortable but fire proof hall in which present shows are given. But even they are limited in number by certain obscure local by-laws.

So, to be an intelligent worker cinema-goer in England is not easy. A bourgeois film-society in London with expensive rates and a high-sounding committee gets privileges the workers' societies are denied. But, nevertheless, the work goes on.

The future holds prospects of further difficulties. Talkies impose a financial strain almost unbearable, while the standard of production is definitely too low, and Russia, the home of worker-art, has still to send us the results of her latest experiments. But the art of the silent screen is not yet exhausted, while England teems with cinema material waiting to be fixed in celluloid by a future worker-director of a worker-production unit. A start has already been made by the Federation, and shortly Merseyside's docks and dockers with their manifold problems will be screened by the Merseyside Society. And strikes and bread lines and unemployed marches will be woven into great works of revolutionary movement. But what will the Censor say? Perhaps by then he will have followed the gold standard into oblivion!

TECHNICAL BRILLIANCE OR IDEOLOGY?

With as yet no evidence of Soviet achievement in the sound cinema,* those in America who have been looking for the talkie to vindicate itself have watched with interest the efforts of other European studios to solve the problems of the microphone and sound track before the genius of the Soviet directors determines the new esthetic of the film. However, not much of value has been forthcoming, for the Germans have lost themselves in the slough of musical comedy, while the French cannot free themselves from slavish imitation of American commercial methods. *Das Maedel von der Reeperbahn*, hailed as a masterpiece of the continent, failed to find a synthesis of the traditional intimate film and the new operetta style despite its remarkable contrast of two types of woman.

Among the most recent of European importations are Rene Clair's *Le Million* and G. W. Pabst's *Die Drei Groschenoper*. In both films one can see the director feeling his way from situation to situation with no sure hand, drawing from his fund of resources with almost no sense of unity of style or dynamic structure. Yet both are brilliant for what they are intended to be, even though that accomplishment is a violation of the true dialectics of the film.

Clair's film does not pretend to be anything more than an entertainment along the lines of the director's peculiar talent—a penchant for satiric wit. It follows the conventional "chase" pattern immortalized by Mack Sennett's cop comedies and, indeed, shows no great advance over them in the realization of cinematic values. Its constant straining after effect grows increasingly irritating as one becomes aware that the things Clair is ridiculing are so very easily disposed of, if not taken for granted and pushed off to one side to make room for greater problems. Then, too, it is all only good-natured spoofing, never far from pathos that is inherent in the loving care with which each type is characterized. Purely bourgeois in its appeal, *Le Million* often approaches infantile humor when it is supposed to be witty. Technically, it is a concession to popular taste, deserting many of the mounting achievements of the same director's *Sous les Toits de Paris*. In seeking to shift emphasis the director often loses himself in the contemplation of documentary material. The dialogue and action sequences are not well spaced, and the alternate use of descriptive sound with lip-moving pantomime (influence of Mickey Mouse Cartoons here) and scenes full of recorded phrases, breaks up the tonal rhythm, for the effect is invariably that certain stretches of sound track have been "dubbed." The scenario-construction is very poor.

If Clair's film can be excused as just a fantastic comedy with music, *Die Drei Groschenoper* cannot be passed off so lightly, for it presents itself potentially as "a film for the revolutionary." There have even been rumors that it was accepted in Berlin as a piece of Communist propaganda masking as a modernization

of John Gay's *The Beggars' Opera*. Certain it is that it has not caused any great excitement so far in New York and that is not entirely due to the astuteness of the American people. The film does not render homage to the powers that be, but neither does it sympathize with the exploited underdog. It is entirely lacking in humanity and is painfully mocking in its overtones. Even its humor is vicious in its implications and the impersonal detachment with which the grim march of the beggars is presented indicates a fatalistic acceptance of diseased social conditions. Here is no insistent dialectics of an Eisenstein, no lyrical perspective of a Pudovkin, no poetic vision of a Dovzhenko, but the masochistic clairvoyance of a man who feels the death-rattle in the throat of capitalistic society. The revengeful king of the beggars incites the blind plodding masses to a rebellious march that disperses the dummy superiority of royalty, but as the sullen protestants disappear down the empty streets their revolt becomes a mere gesture. For now the true rulers are revealed, secure in their power, as the racketeer and the chief of police. Together with the beggar king, whose feint has been successful, they plan the future exploitation of the frustrated masses. There is no way out, this thing must go on forever as long as he lives. Such is the ideology of *Die Drei Groschenoper*.

How this can be misconstrued as Communist propaganda is hard to see. True, Pabst is merciless in drawing the rapacious character of his racketeers and unhesitant in depicting the bloody corruption of the police, but instead of using the true working-class as his foils, he holds up the grotesque mirror of its slum proletariat—the economic misfit who in turn lives on the parasitic capitalist. There is something diabolically cruel about the baroque spirit which pervades the film, and yet it is successful in capturing the baffling aspect that contemporary life must have for a bourgeois intellectual disgusted with the world.

Unfortunately, the film's unity suffers from the taint of operetta interpolations and often Pabst is compelled to forsake his devotion to the filmic representation of mind and motivation in order to convey the sentiment of actional incident.

Just how much the society within which the creators of these two films worked is responsible for their lack of social conscience is hard to say. But satire should at least contain some dialectic analysis of existing conditions and it is doubtful if the unscrupulousness of Pabst is not invidious in its suggestion and false emphasis. What is lacking is the purposeful intent of the Soviet film which does not need to protect itself, but only to improve society.

*Editor Note: As this goes to press, word comes from the Soviet Union of the immense success of the two new sound films: *The Road to Life* and the Kozintstov-Trauberg production, *Alone*. These two films are said to have started the long-awaited revolution in the use of sound.

OZEP'S FILM, "THE MURDERER KARAMAZOV"

That this picture, which by way of filmic concept offered exceptional values, had no effect on the broad masses, is in all probability due to the fact that in the filmic-dramatic treatment a compromise was made: its theme was vested with unfinished, half-solved psychological problems.

On the one hand, the expansive Dostoevskian ideology was compressed into a general formula of appeal, and on the other hand, as a result of this procedure, all deeper contact with the psychological development of the theme was lost. For this reason the bare, crystallized action of the film, a murder affair, touched on the original idea only in its high spots and made various longer or shorter cross-cuts through the straight line of concept, as well as through the physical action, of the novel itself.

Of course, this rationalization of the material for purposes of filmic adaptation was unavoidable—a hypothetical necessity. This immediately raises the question of how far it is possible to present filmically, that is, to do filmic justice to a literary work of such scope as *The Brothers Karamazov*. Regardless of the philosophical power of its dialectical comment, this dimensional structure of Dostoevsky's novel demands its definite mode of action—for the many episodes, cross-cuts of narrative and various interruptive tales are the trunks and branches of the tree, and these result in that vast expansion which, in the final analysis, is experienced as a pleasant release, even though it may not be felt as a necessity compellingly bound to the structure.

That Fedor Ozep, the creator of this film, was fully aware of the enormous difficulties confronting him in the filmic presentation of this powerful material is clearly evident in the fact that his film does not bear the title of the novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, but instead is called *The Murderer Karamazov*. Furthermore, in the credit-title the picture is announced as a "Treatment of the Novel of Dostoevsky"; and, finally, Ozep borrowed only such themes from the original as contained purely motoric and dynamic elements. This forced a change of values and established a new ideology—in short, a film which had little, if anything, in common with its literary antecedent, or better, which dared not have such a relationship.

Thus, the frequently undertaken experiment to present literary works in their completeness on the screen, must again be accepted negatively. However, if this film is reviewed critically in the light of its purely cinematic content and considered on the basis of its elementary filmic legitimacy, which is essential to cinema-art, the results immediately become positive.

Recognizing Ozep as a product of the strictly scientific Soviet film-school, we have in him a film director of highly individual mold. We are dealing here with

a man of great skill who has conquered the A-B-C of montage and permeated it with his own genius and creative power.

Not once are we conscious in this film of a deliberately placed design; never are we aware of the movement of the camera, nor do we feel that the racing, staccato cuts of the carriage-ride, for example, are merely a display of acquired knowledge. Throughout the picture, the harmony of image-values is consummated in a perfect symphony. The camera is ever the experiencing eye of the spectator, or the piercing vision of the protagonist himself. At all times the complete collectivism of the filmic apparatus is under the dominant control of the director.

With sweeping brush-strokes the opening sequence is depicted.

First various placements of a locomotive in deep night atmosphere. Smoking funnel, wheels, the engine (boiler), then the moving semaphores. In each image, steam and smoke in action. These image-values blend together in organic sequence. Then we see and hear an accordion, its rhythm replacing the previous metric musical accompaniment which accentuated the preceding scenes.

Without seeing the railroad station or the train in totality, nor the rails leading into some landscape, by this means of analytical montage-forms we are familiarized with the whole location and atmosphere.

Special emphasis is placed particularly on the locomotive. It is a symbol of power. It takes on an over-tonal significance, creating a thought-association with the action that follows (Dmitri's farewell to Katharina).

The scant dialogue, which serves to explain the reason of Dmitri's departure—(a trip to his father to gain consent to marry Katharina and thus secure 3000 rubles)—is strengthened by these specific image-values of the locomotive. Panting, boiling, spouting steam, the locomotive represses its power until the conductor's signal designates the starting-time.

The semaphores begin to move, and again we see, in detail, the specific parts of the locomotive. More smoke and steam come into view, and as the locomotive gradually moves out of the picture, we quickly switch to the action. Dmitri hurriedly, as his train starts slowly in motion, grabs a huge bouquet of flowers from a little flower-girl standing in the foreground. He gives these flowers to Katharina, embraces and kisses her, and jumps on the platform of the train, which, speeding up in tempo, pulls out of the screen.

Motionless, arms limp at her side, Katharina stands there, with her back to the camera. (This static posture and demeanor of Katharina is maintained through the whole film.) And as the last coach with its tail-light disappears into the distance and in the back-

ground reigns complete darkness, the flower-girl standing on the right side of the picture-frame steps up to Katharina and draws here attention to the fact that "the lieutenant forgot to pay for the flowers."

Katharina gives her the amount. And with this the first sequence closes.

Dmitri's trip serves the purpose of sustaining, or conveying, the tension through the lap dissolve into the next sequence.

Location: His father's estate. Introduction of Ivan, the servant Smerdyakov, and the old man, awaiting the visit of Gruschenka. This filmically plastic creation of the old Karamazov is superb. His crude directness establishes him as the strongest figure and as the center of the action. The old man is an autocrat of licentiousness, a monarch whose unbroken nature knows no partiality. Deeply convinced of the utility of immorality, he drinks in life like a draught of cognac. Only the most expressive elements are used and effectively sketched in the portrayal of his character.

In contrast to the long shot of the vast entrance-hall, shown at full range, in the old man's room only single objects are touched upon. The room in its totality is never shown. A table with tid-bits is painstakingly arranged (seen from above, downward) and becomes the visual center of the scene. A set table and anticipation. An ikon, characterizing splendidly the vitality and the shrewd religiosity of the old fellow. The flame of ilfe still flickers. (And how it flickers!) A lace ornamented bed-cover has been drawn back and the silken bedding lies open, pointing to the sexual contemplations of the old libertine. In various placements, we see him restlessly pacing the floor. He is full of eager expectation. His hands move nervously about the table, making a few quick adjustments.

Now the action changes to exteriors on the street. A pouring rain is indicated in a few specific medium closeups. Rain on the front porch, rain from the waterspout, rain in the gutter. The mood of rain assumes a dramatic significance. Then, in medium shot, we see the entrance to the mansion. A carriage (focus, side-view) drives up. This placement shows merely the lower parts of the carriage. The horses' legs, wheels and carriage-step, Dmitri's legs, as they step from the carriage, come into the field of vision. Then cut, seen from above, across the driver's back, toward Dmitri. He pays the driver his fee, and the carriage drives out of scene. Dmitri walks up to the entrance and pulls the bell-strap. Cut to closeup of the bell in the interior of the hallway, as it rings. Reaction of Karamazov.

The huge, massive door of the interior, securely locked and bolted with a heavy iron rod, serves as a symbol of the greed and avarice of the elder Karamazov. In great excitement, with trembling hands, he pours a glass of champagne. He thinks: "Who can this be? It must be Gruschenka, of course!"

Then, in the spacious hallway, Smerdyakov comes walking stealthily toward the door. He steps out of frame. The movement is repeated in medium closeup as he reappears immediately in front of the entrance door. He opens the big lock and lifts the heavy iron bolt, not, however, before he has taken one last, critically vain glance at himself in the mirror. (Gruschenka.)

Dmitri enters through the open doorway and steps into the interior of the house. Disappointed surprise

is clearly manifested by Smerdyakov and Ivan. After a short passage of dialogue, Dmitri walks toward the door of his father's room. The door opens and the old fellow stands radiantly on the threshold. He recognizes his son Dmitri. His joyous mood suddenly changes. His features become distorted into a reaction of disappointment and rage. Dmitri unsuspectingly takes the glass of champagne out of the old man's hand and empties it in one draught. Result: mutual misunderstanding produces short circuit and explosion within the elder Karamazov.

The discussion that now follows between father and son occurs behind locked doors. We become aware of the conflict from the reactions of Smerdyakov and Ivan, who are listening in the big hallway.

Without ever being able to understand a single word, we hear in this long shot the quarrel between the old fellow and Dmitri. The tempo of this incomprehensible dialogue rises rhythmically to a crescendo, skillfully interrupted by significant pauses. It reaches a raging *furioso* when the door opens abruptly and Dmitri emerges in excited agitation. Through the half-open door he screams at the old fellow, whom we cannot see, that he (Dmitri) "will force a change in existing conditions. Just wait and see"; he "will go directly to Gruschenka." On the word "Gruschenka" the scene lap dissolves into her home. Dmitri asks to be admitted.

With the fade-out from the Karamazov mansion, the cardinal point of the tragedy is established.

The types in their various characteristics are revealed one after another, in sequential order, and their temporary relations to each other unfold the carefully constructed framework behind the dramatic action. Here, dramaturgically speaking, the motive of the "deed" is for the first time defined. (Smerdyakov's words: "He will yet murder him.")

The leading motive of the plot has been sketched. It proves of extraordinary advantage in the linking up and the dramatic evaluation of the plot, that the brothers Karamazov were formerly separated and meet here, for the first time, in the stifling atmosphere of the father's home. Later the old man's conduct leads them to an open utterance of their views.

The role of the third son in the novel is dispensed with in the filmic adaptation, but is partly substituted by Smerdyakov. He alone is made a confidant to old Karamazov and serves as mediator between Dmitri and Ivan, two antagonistic elements, and between the hostile women, Katharina and Gruschenka, who in the later course of events widen the gap between the brothers.

Dmitri at Gruschenka's house. At the entrance-door, the maid-servant tries to explain to Dmitri that it is impossible for Gruschenka to see him as she has visitors and is on the point of leaving. But Dmitri is obstinate and refuses to be turned away. The servant reports to her mistress.

In medium shot we see Gruschenka surrounded by her friends as they prepare to leave. Indignant, she commands the servant not to admit this man under any conditions.

Suddenly she stops in the midst of her speech and sees: Cut to medium close shot: Dmitri in the frame of the door.

Cut to close shot: Gruschenka as seen from Dmitri's point of view. Cut back to Dmitri: his eyes drop slowly as they "size up" his opposite.

This radical cut from Gruschenka and the surrounding group to the closeup of Dmitri arouses in the spectator a sensation of Dmitri having been hurled into the room and the anticipation of an explosion to follow. However, nothing happens. Instead, Dmitri accepts, with the meekness of a lamb, Gruschenka's mocking challenge to await her return to the apartment. Gayly, she tosses the remark at him: "If you want to wait?—but it may be very late!"

This wide-treatment of "waiting" is symbolized by a bronze mantel-clock with a ball-shaped pendulum that moves in rotation. The rotating pendulum is later repeated in closeup.

The dramaturgical structure of this scene is organized in parallel lines. The one element is time as it passes—waiting; the other is accomplished through dialogue—the servant's story, which exposes Gruschenka's past life to Dmitri.

Late in the night Gruschenka returns to her apartment. Now comes the explosion. The big scene between Gruschenka and Dmitri reveals for the first time the depths of her nature.

Noteworthy in this scene is the direct (radical) cut to a closeup of an angora cat. Its existence was not established beforehand. The cat serves as first-class plastic material to express the catlike nature of Gruschenka. Both values are mutually equivalent.

The dramatic interpretation of Anna Sten, who with her art embodies the colorful character of Gruschenka to perfection, cannot be valued highly enough. It is fascinating to observe how she makes use of a picture of Katharina, which has dropped from Dmitri's pocket, and lets it serve as a means of practising her wiles on him. She is all winning smiles, promises and softest allurements one minute, and the mewing, striking, primitive, cat-nature the next.

As she leaps on the chair, we reach the climax—the kiss. This struggle for the kiss is most provocatively and effectively handled by means of a series of flash-cuts in medium shot.

The constant pattering of the night rain as it rattles against the window-panes serves as a visual counterpoint to the erotically laden atmosphere of the interior.

The strongest and most expressive moment of the film is Dmitri's departure at early dawn.

Ozep works here with overtones and uses the play of nature's elements for the structure of Dmitri's mood and his emotional reactions.

Exterior: Entrance to Gruschenka's house. Medium close shot on Dmitri. Behind him the door swings shut. He takes a step forward. Lost in thought, he removes his cap. His dazed eyes glance up.

Cut to open sky. Cut back to Dmitri. Cut to morning landscape. Nature breathes. The night's rain still lingers in the trees. Cut back to Dmitri. He takes a deep breath. His glance goes heavenward. Again the sky and passing clouds. Then a bush. In its branches drops of water that glisten like diamonds. Close shot on the drops of water. They fall to the ground. Cut back to Dmitri in medium closeup. He becomes aware of the waterspout as a small stream dribbles down from the roof. He stretches out his hand. Lets it fill up and thoughtfully cools his brow.

In totality shot, Dmitri cleanses himself of the night; he wanders out into the fresh morning air, prepared for the day.

The gripping effect of these scenes is by no means evoked by the esthetic value of these nature-images, but is produced by use of "overtone montage," which emerges as a living symbol *between* the image-values, that is, *within* the picture-cut.

A symbol is vital, significant, when it presents the best chosen, highest possible expression of the anticipated vision, of facts not known, or but vaguely known, to the spectator. Under these conditions, the symbol effects "unconscious" participation. It formulates an act of "unconsciousness." The more general this act becomes, the more general, the broader, becomes its sphere of reaction, for it touches in everyone a familiar note.

The structure of the preceding sequence deals with three phases of the dramatic line-up:

1. Dmitri—Katharina
2. Dmitri—Father
3. Father—Gruschenka—Dmitri

As the action of the film, after the "raindrop scenes" moves increasingly into a gigantic mass of conflicts, and the prescribed length of a commercial film does not permit it to do full justice to these conflicts by developing them along the line of a strictly Dostoevskian interpretation, from now on the film loses somewhat its power of impression and it does not intensify itself again until it comes to the sequence of the "night of the murder."

However, if we wish to split up these manifold sequences, it is possible to describe superficially this increasingly powerful flow of action as the phases of:

4. Murder
5. Court-trial
6. Gruschenka—Dmitri

Moving-camera shots have become a fad in Hollywood. With very few exceptions, the camera is at all times in motion: it turns, lifts, lowers, etc. Very rarely, however, have these Hollywood camera-movements any organic connection with the content of the scene. They are a form of cheap exhibitionism, not used of necessity, but because of a craving for vulgar, gaudy showing-off. Static placements connected by direct cuts would be far more plausible than these contorted methods, which merely weaken the desired impression.

In contrast to this, when Ozep sets his camera in motion in *Karamazov*, he has good reason for doing so. His camera-movements are in the highest degree organically related to the content. The results obtained by Ozep in the instances where his camera moves are results that could not be so simply achieved by static placements (direct cuts). His movements dovetail and melt into the scene. Ozep permits his camera to step into action only when through its movement, the rhythmic line of the filmic whole is advanced and the harmonious building-up of the complete structure is thereby guaranteed.

An example of an Ozep camera-movement:

With a fade-in, we see in closeup, in a mirror, a contorted reflection of someone's head. The camera moves backwards. We become aware that the surface of the mirror is the glistening roundness of a samovar.

The camera moves on. The back of a waiter steps into frame; we recognize his head as the one reflected in the mirrored surface of the samovar. With childish vanity, he examines his hair-comb. With his right hand he adjust the line of the part. With the left hand he holds a service-tray. In waiter-fashion, he pulls it up high. A few glasses, filled to the brim, come into frame. He skilfully balances the tray above his shoulders and walks with hasty steps toward the farthest end of the picture. At closeup range, the camera follows behind the waiter, throughout the room. In the composition of the frame we see the waiter's head, shoulders and the tray. In the distant background, through a doorway, we see the interior of a billiard-room. The waiter enters this room. The camera follows him and then stops, as the waiter steps up to Dmitri and serves him a drink.

Samovar—vanity of waiter—drinks—spaciousness of room—guests—in a word, the entire scenic atmosphere is effectively compressed into one single placement and the nervous restlessness of Dmitri, by means of this camera-objectification, is illustrated for the spectator.

Ozep, in particular, lays great stress on the compositional value of the scent. All optical appearances—architecture—furniture—objects of all kinds, are in every case placed as advantageously as possible in the picture-frame, so that they *accentuate* the *content* of the scenic action. Ozep forces the spectator to see only that which is absolutely necessary for his understanding or that which is later to refresh his memory. All other elements are ruthlessly discarded and eliminated from the picture. Only the most important, which contains positive significance for the scenic content at hand, is thrown into strong relief.

For the picturization of the night of the murder, Ozep resorts to the three "notorious" dashes of Dostoevskian fame, the use of which brought upon the great Russian author severe criticism for having touched on the technique of a mediocre detective-novel. These dashes are cheap as they cause the reader to pass through unsolved tension and cunningly leave him at a loss as to who it was that committed the murder. Ozep also makes use of this sensational "WHO"? He poses it as a formal question here, as a formal question there. But at least Ozep's film-dramaturgy justifies this particular application of the method.

Ozep builds the Russian landscape into the murder-affair. Nature's elements serve as putty and cement for the construction of supermundane realities. Moonlight-night—a tree stump—a howling dog—a bush—the illumined window—wind—blowing curtains—the fence—the man—the entire scene is enveloped in an uncanny atmosphere. Everything is charged with a premonitory sense of weird happenings.

This "overtonal" montage of the murder-night (*Mordnacht-montage*) Ozep also applies to Dmitri's night-ride in the carriage. This episode starts slowly in long shot. As the camera turns about, gradually, in the distance the carriage comes into view. The elements of the picture carriage—horses—avenue—trees—tree-trunks—tree-tops—sky—landscape—horses—horses' legs—driver—drive whipping up the horses—by degrees fall into a speeding-up, racing staccato of flash cuts. All becomes a mad race, a raving, scream-

ing; in short, a perfect symbol of Dmitri's inner turmoil and his yearning to get to Gruschenka, speedily, immediately.

His arrival at the pleasure-house and his search for Gruschenka are magnificently solved by means of image-technique. The camera follows his every step through the various rooms and delicately accentuates his nervous impatience. The erotic atmosphere violently increases its pressure until Karamazov finally discovers Gruschenka on the upper floor, side by side with her former lover.

Then lightning strikes as Dmitri's *chambre-separee* blissfulness is abruptly cut short by a harsh knock from the police.

Ozep's exceptional filmic insight proclaims itself also in the extremely clever weighing of the image and sound values. The image-conception always comes first. The dialogue is reduced to a minimum, and sound and music are artfully applied as an accentuation of the visualization-process. (Cf. sound-treatment of kettle-drum and bells in the long carriage-ride.)

It should, however, be mentioned that the hellish tempo of the carriage-ride and the orgy of intoxication occupy too great a space in the rhythmic construction of the whole, and take the breath away, so to speak, from the court-room scene, which should really have been the high point of the film since it contains the *denouement* and the untangling of the story's threads.

Here, Ozep missed a wonderful opportunity for a rhythmically organized, logical decomposition of the tension. Though he carried the action of Ivan-Smerdyakov in a parallel line with the court scenes, it nevertheless ended in a blind alley, for Smerdyakov's appearance at court does not enter the field of vision, despite the fact that by means of Smerdyakov's confession that he himself is the murderer of the elder Karamazov, Smerdyakov without anything further becomes the conveyor of tention of the whole situation.

Example of the parallel action:

Court-trial—Ivan at Smerdyakov's

Court-trial—Smerdyakov confesses

Court-trial—Ivan and Smerdyakov on the way to the court-house

Court-trial—Ivan and Smerdyakov at the entrance of the court-house

Court-trial—Ivan steps up to the judge

Smerdyakov

in the ante-

room —Court-Trial; Ivan reveals.

Ante-room

without Smer-

dyakov —Court-trial; clerk announces to the judge the suicide of Smerdyakov.

The end of the film bursts out into a refrain which thematically is a pure adaptation of Tolston.

With sweeping brush-strokes Dmitri's deportation and Gruschenka's voluntary accompaniment of him into exile, are depicted. A locomotive is ready to go. Smoking funnel, wheels, the engine (boiler), then the moving semaphores,—in short, all the image-elements of the beginning of the film are repeated, until finally the trains pull out. Behind an iron-grated window, Dmitri; on the platform of the end car, Gruschenka; and then train pulls out, panting, boiling, steaming into the landscape, toward Siberia.

BULLETIN NO. 1 OF THE MEXICAN CINE CLUB

The Cine Club of Mexico has been organized and affiliated with the Film Society of London and with the League of Cine Clubs of Paris. Its program is the same as that of the cine clubs throughout the world, but it is especially akin to the Spanish Cine Club which has achieved great success in the two years of its existence.

The essential points of its program are: (1) to procure the showing of good European, American and Asiatic vanguard films; (b) to establish the educational cinema, with special attention to the systematic showing of scientific films; (c) to study the History of the Cinema by means of film-exhibits dealing with the cinema in retrospect; (d) to hold lectures on the esthetic, scientific and social importance of cinematography; (e) to create a favorable atmosphere out of which a Mexican cinema art may emerge.

The Mexican Cine Club will follow the plan of the successful foreign cine clubs in linking its activities with a conscientious study of our necessities. Its purpose is highly social and not lucrative.

The Executive Committee of the Cine Club is comprised of the following:

Art Director: Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano.

Technical Director: Emilio Amero.

Secretaries of Finance: Manuel Alvarez Bravo
Maria Izquierdo.

Sec'y of Propaganda: Carlos Merida.

Directors: Maria M. de Alvarez Bravo and Roberto Montenegro.

General Secretary: Agustin Aragon Leiva.

The organizers of the Cine Club are among the most serious-minded writers, artists, journalists and critics in Mexico, who have been able to see that our environment is a sufficiently cultured and mature to make possible the existence of a Cine Club whose prime mission is to give the cinema the place which it deserves as a powerful vehicle of culture.

In order to make known the circumstances which have determined the creation of the Cine Club and to point out the details of its program, these organizers will shortly circulate a manifesto calling for general active cooperation in the establishment and functioning of the Mexican Cine Club.

By-laws of the Mexican Cine Club

Article 1. The Cine Club's social residence will be in Mexico City.

Article 2. The object of the Cine Club is:

- (a) to show films, provided by the Film Society of London, the International League of Cine Clubs, the Film Amateurs' League and similar organizations as well as films which in the opinion of the Cine Club directors merit consideration at the Club's sessions. To cooperate in the establishment of a Mexican cinematography.
- (b) to show factory-films of high artistic quality, either at the expense of the Cine Club itself or in combination with some promoting management.

(c) to organize lectures and publish articles and critical reviews on cinematography.

(d) to work for the establishment of the educational cinema by means of scientific films; to see that the social function which cinematography can fulfill be made effective in Mexico.

Article 3. The Mexican Cine Club proposes to work together with the foreign cine clubs, but at the same time to investigate the problems of its own surroundings.

Article 4. The Cine Club will be comprised of an unlimited number of members. These will be divided into active members and subscribing members. Active members and subscribers will pay the same amount of dues and will enjoy equal rights, but active members will be given various duties to fulfill.

Article 5. Active members are obliged to cooperate by means of work and commissions toward the development of the Cine Club. Their number will be unlimited, but every candidate for membership must be proposed by two active members in good standing and be passed upon by the respective committee.

Article 6. Any person, without distinction of nationality or social category, may become a subscribing member of the Cine Club.

Article 7. Active and subscribing members of the Cine Club have the following social rights: (a) to attend all the cinematographic sessions of the Cine Club; (b) to enjoy any privilege which the Cine Club may obtain for its members.

Article 8. The sessions of the Cine Club will be of two kinds: business and cinematographic. Only active members will be entitled to attend the former. The cinematographic sessions will be held at stated intervals, preferably every month as soon as this is possible. They will consist of the showing of films, of short lectures, reading of reports, suggestions, etc.

Article 9. The cinematographic sessions will be public, and non-members will pay an admission charge. The difference between the total dues and that of the admission charges, together with the right to receive mail at the club's post-office box, constitute the member's privilege.

Article 10. Those joining the Cine Club will pay a membership fee of one peso, Mexican silver currency, and monthly dues of one peso fifty centavos, Mexican silver currency. Payments will be made in advance.

Article 11. Each member of the Cine Club will receive two tickets for every cinematographic session and a 25 percent discount on tickets obtained from non-members.

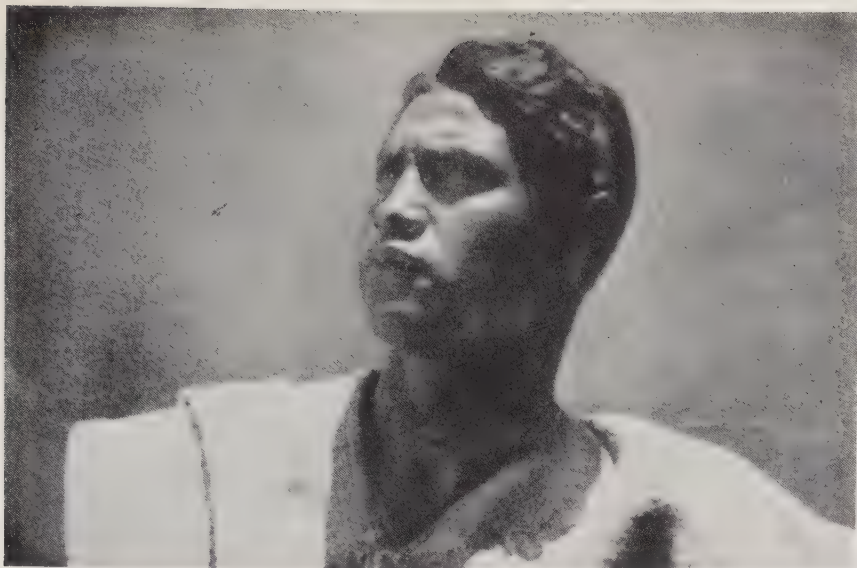
Article 12. The administration of the Cine Club will be carried on through a Directorial Council consisting of an Art Director, a Technical Director, a General Secretary, two Secretaries of Finance, a Secretary of Propaganda and two Directors. This Council will be elected by the active members for a period of two years.

Article 13. When the Cine Club attains a membership of one thousand, it will form itself into a Cooperative Society, Ltd.

Article 14. The financial reserves which the Cine Club may possibly own at some future date will be spent on artistic films to be produced by the Cine Club itself.

Mexico City, June 4, 1931.

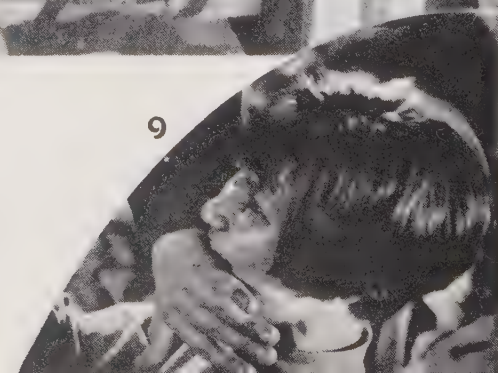
General Sec'y., Agustin Aragon Leiva.



Close up of Martin Hernandez, the Mexican-Indian

Mexican peons, watching from a hilltop the passing funeral . . .





ILYA ZACHAROVITCH TRAUBERG

Russia's Youngest Film Director

There is a curious tradition in the Hollywood movie-industry that in order to be able to direct films a man must be close to middle-age or beyond. Direction of feature films is considered to be a task beyond the power and capacity of young men and women in their early twenties. The case of Ilya Trauberg, however, gives the lie to the tradition, and, like so many other achievements of the Soviet cinema, it reveals again that the things which Hollywood says are "impossible" or "impractical," are both possible and practical.

Ilya Trauberg is a graduate pupil of Eisenstein,—the latter's most renowned student. He is the youngest director in Russia, an outstanding example of how the Soviet Union encourages the development of young talent and gives it a chance to function. Here in capitalist America, the so-called "land of opportunity" (sic!), there is no chance whatever for working-class youth in the field of art. This is especially the case in the cinema, where the only opportunity for "youth" to function is in the eventuality of its being related to some powerful movie mogul. But then, the basic difference is one between sheer prostitution of brains and energy for vulgar commercial purposes on the one hand, and the utilization of energy for the creation of artistic masterpieces on the other hand.

Thus, Trauberg, who is now twenty-five years of age, has made three films of eminent artistic importance: *Metal*, *The Stormy Way*, and *China Express*. His fourth picture is in production now. Of these three, *China Express* is the best known to the Western world. It was a first-rate success in Germany, England, other European countries, and in the United States.

In a letter to the editors of *Experimental Cinema*, Trauberg gives some interesting information:

"Though I am twenty-five years old, I have been working in the cinema for six years already, three of which I worked as a critic and theorist and during

this period was interested mostly in American pictures. Under the guidance of Eisenstein, my outlook was changed and shaped. Only by working with him did I begin to understand—what cinema is.

"My first independent work dates from 1928—an educational (culture) film, *Stormy Way*, the subject of which was the automobile industry and railroad-building in U.S.S.R. It was an attempt to wipe out the distinction between "art films" and educational films. It was an attempt to create a genre of feuilleton. This task was fulfilled to a certain degree, in spite of many mistakes. The genre is now widely established and used in Soviet cinema.

"Next work: *China Express*. This seems to me to assemble all the sins and infatuations of my youth.

"Later I created a long film (based on documents)—*Metal*, the subject of which was the Socialistic up-building of heavy industry.

"Now I am engaged in talkies and tone-films. They give me the inspiration to learn and work anew. Great ideas, mostly concerning montage, which we want to fulfill in spite of very poor mechanical equipment, excite us and force us to look at things from a new angle. In these questions I fully agree with the *Manifesto on Sound by Eisenstein*, which you no doubt know.*

"A present I am writing a scenario about the psychology of a European worker, who is nearing revolution I am making a complete survey of my method of creation, my views in all lines concerning moving picture direction, beginning with the construction of the scenario to the composition of the "shot" and every small detail of the work. I am trying to find out new ways of expression, of emotional influence—more simple, more popular and more realistic. I am trying to resuscitate the genre of melodrama in order to serve the aims of our ideological understandings (principles) The main figure of my picture is man, his psyche, his reconstruction."* *

Trauberg is now working in the studios of Leningrad. His assistant is Herbert Marshall, a young English student who went to Russia three years ago to study montage in the Moscow Film University. When Marshall has completed his apprenticeship with Trauberg he will be given an opportunity to direct his own films.

In an early issue, *Experimental Cinema* will publish an essay by Trauberg dealing with his directorial methods and montage-conceptions.

* Trauberg refers to the famous *Manifesto on the Sound Film* which was collectively written, signed and issued by Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Pudovkin last year.

** These quotations are from a personal letter that Trauberg sent to the editors of *Experimental Cinema*. The letter was written in English and the quotations are exact excerpts from the main text of the letter.

TRAUBERG STILLS

2. Trauberg's latest film, now in production. The film is as yet untitled. It deals with the approaching revolution in Europe.
1. *China Express*.
3. *Metal*.
4. *China Express*.
5. Ilya Zacharovitch Trauberg.
6. Production-still from *China Express*. Trauberg is seated next to the camera.
7. Herbert Marshall and Ilya Trauberg on a Soviet movie-set. Marshall, the English film-student, is working with Trauberg as part of his course of study in the Moscow Cinema University.
8. *Stormy Way*, Trauberg's first film (1928).
9. *China Express*.

A LETTER FROM MOSCOW

During the Revolution celebrations of November, there was shown in Moscow and Leningrad the third (following *The Road to Life* and *Alone*) big Soviet sound film, *Mountains of Gold*, or *Golden Hills*, directed by Jutkevitch. This picture was produced in the Leningrad Film Studios, which also made the sound film *Alone* and the silent film, *China Express*.

In its silent sections, *Mountains of Gold* is greatly influenced by Pudovkin's silent films, *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg*. The types and the situations are very similar, although, of course, they are based directly on the history of a political strike in the biggest metal-plant of old St. Petersburg, the Putilov-Works. If you would merely see the stills, you would think Jutkevitch is a second Pudovkin!

What about the story itself? I shall quote to you what I wrote recently in the *Moscow News*:

"The cast being limited to three characters only, the films offer great opportunities for "plot development." The films show two workers against the background of a large metal works in old Petersburg in the days before the World War.

"The first is a class-conscious worker who understands the conflicting interests of the capitalists and the proletariat. The other, a peasant who has just been ruined by the local landowner, has come to town for the sole purpose of earning enough money to buy himself a horse and return to his native village.

"However, as the plot unfolds itself, the class-conscious proletarian recognizes that although the boss of the works is his enemy, he bribes his servants with silver watches.

"The silver watch becomes the *leit-motif* of the whole film.

"The first worker, who has just received a silver watch as a gift from the boss for betraying his fellow-workers, repairs to the nearest saloon and sings the song of the 'Golden Hills'—or the 'Mountains of Gold'—that is, the mountains of gold which he will heap up while working for his boss."

This, of course, is by no means a new idea. We saw it happen with Ivan, the hero of *End of St. Petersburg*. But, of course, it has a very important political value: to show all young people how the situation was before the World War and the conditions under which the working class was living at that time.

But the main power of the film is in the sound: the dialogue and the music. The complete text of the talk of the peasant, just coming from the village, was written by the great master of the Russian language, Chapigin (Leningrad). And the way in which this talk is used is very remarkable. There are long dia-

logues, and also monologues, but they are never tiresome. Why?

In answering this question, I shall first relate an excellent observation made by the Soviet film-journalist, Leo Mur, during a discussion of talkies over the radio. He said that long speeches in themselves need not be so tiresome. We become tired, seeing long talkies, not by reason of the length of the speeches, but by reason of the length of the suitable silent part of the film—the photography. It is because, says Leo Mur, we "understand" (apprehend) those things which we see, much quicker than those which we hear.

And so it really is. By vision, by purely visual means, we can project movement very easily; less easily, emotion; and with difficulty, thought. There are, though, more instances of the projection of thought in Soviet pictures, than in the pictures of America and other countries. And in speech, there is a big difference between rendering an emotion and a thought. The only thing is that we must expend more time and attention than we do in conveying movement.

But in the movie, we can connect the talk with vision, as we wish, and combine very rapid speech with speedy change of images. So it was done in *Mountains of Gold*, although not in a very pure and convincing form.

For example—the worker, coming from the village, tells about the way his "farm" is managed. This is a monologue, and a very slow monologue. But it is not tiresome, because during this speech we see on the screen silent scenes about which the speech is concerned.

This device is used through the bigger half of the film.

The other device is the manner of using music. There is simple music, illustrating those things which we see on the screen. But it does not cease as the scene is finished. As in the art of fugue, the mutual pursuit of voices or parts (one of the most important forms of music) is continuous all through the film. It provides a kind of background for the whole subject, and it illustrates the inner emotions of the players—and of the audience as well! In *Mountains of Gold* there is a double fugue, a fugue which begins with two parts and two subjects simultaneously. The one is the song, *Mountains of Gold* (based on the theme-idea of the picture); the other is a simple waltz for wind-orchestra, composed by Shostakovitch. This one is the more important of the two. We hear them in beautiful growing calm in the first scene, when the peasants are coming to the metal plant inquiring about some work. Then, in the scenes of bribery with the silver watch, the music *meaows* like a Hawaiian guitar.

And at the end, in a furious fortissimo of the whole symphonic orchestra, it storms through the scene where the silver watch is hurled back at the boss.

There are also some excellent scenes in a bar, where the drunken talk of the hero (he has just received the silver watch) is played against the background of the strongest old *isiganian* (gypsy) romance-music.

But, it would take too long to relate everything about this film. It is more a work of art than *The Road to Life* and more popular than *Alone*. There is one outstanding fault in *Mountains of Gold*—some parts are too long. But I am sure Amkino will show it in California in more suitable length. In my opinion it would also be better named *The Silver Watch* or *Silver Hills*.

The Road to Life and *Alone* are two big sound films which Amkino has not yet shown in America. * They are now making their trip from one European capital to another. The success of *The Road to Life* is tremendous. It is not only the first great Soviet sound film, but also the first Soviet box-office picture. It ran two months in one "movie palace" in Berlin, then several consecutive weeks in twenty-three other first-class Berlin theatres. There has been no equally artistic picture since the time of *Storm Over Asia* by Pudovkin.

The young director of *The Road to Life*, Nicolai Ekk of Mezhrabpomfilm, was several years ago a simple actor in Meyerhold's Theatre, just as the author of the scenario of *Mountains of Gold* was a movie-architect and director of small, and esthetically "dry," films, without subject matter.

What are we waiting to see on the screen during the next few months?

The next big picture will be *The House of the Dead*, produced by Mezhrabpomfilm studios. It is being directed by Federov,* a former assistant of Meyerhold. The continuity of this film was written by our famous theoretician of literature, Victor Shklovsky, who has written many scenarios and continuities (*Bulat Batir*,

The Family Scotinini, *The Daughter of the Captain*, and other historical-literary movie-subjects).

The story of the *House of the Dead* is also taken from literature. ** There was a novel by Dostoevsky, *The Chronicle of the House of the Dead* ("house of the dead"—the jail. Shklovsky has changed the situation. He has made Dostoevsky himself the hero of the film—because the novel itself was written by Dostoevsky when he was in Siberia as a political prisoner. As in *The Road to Life*, there are fine songs in *The House of the Dead*, songs of the Siberian prisoners.

We are also awaiting a big film by Dovzhenko, the famous creator of the silent, but great, *Earth* (called in America, *Soil*). This new film deals with the problems of a human being under the conditions of the period of socialist reconstruction of society. The picture is entitled *Ivan* (Russian name for John), a title which is not less important or significant than the title *Earth*. "Ivan" is one of the workers on Dnieperstory, the huge dam and power plant that is being built on the Dneiper River of the Ukraine.

Next time, after seeing the *House of the Dead*, wholly, and not in parts only (as now), I shall write you more about it.

*Since this letter arrived, as we go to press, we learn that the *House of the Dead* has been finished and shown in Moscow—Ed. Note.

**Federov is the director of the stage-spectacle *Roar, China!*, by S. Tretjanov, produced at Meyerhold's Theatre. This spectacle was highly praised in Germany.—N. Solew.

Roar, China! was put on by the Theatre Guild in New York City two seasons ago. Over and against the vehement protestations of Rouben Mamoulian, the director, the Theatre Guild insisted on emasculating the political ideology of Tretjanov's original manuscript. Bourgeois dictatorship.—Ed. Note.

REMARKS ON CINE-LANGUAGE

Continued from page 24

afar a naval battle, an eruption of a vulcano, or the surface of the moon,—as well as the "class struggle," the inside of a drop of blood, etc.

Such is the field for "macro-," "micro-" and "tele-" shooting. (Microscopic and telescopic.)

I want to add that it is also possible to apply to cinematographic uses the X-Ray tube, and so to pierce through, with the camera, the walls of a house, or see the inside processes of an organism. Furthermore, a plate, sensitive to the infra-red rays, could even "see" through the mist and night.

6.

To conclude: One of the many fundamental differences between the typical "Hollywood" and the Russian film-workers is this: While in Hollywood they work

relying on instinct, "horse sense," empirically acquired knowledge of tricks, camera angles and situations regulated by the indications of the box-office, in Russia, on the other hand, the Soviet film-worker strives to build a rational theory of his art, analyzing it in its infinitesimal formal elements, analyzing at the same time the structure of society. For, to reflect it on the screen—and to transform it into reality—is the function of cinema art.

ERRATA: In the above article, *A Few Remarks on the Elements of Cine-Language*, we wish to call the reader's attention to the following correction: The first sentence on the fifth line, second column, page 24, should read as follows: "The choice of *words* (as Hamlet says, we read only 'words, words, words' . . .) their disposition in a sentence—their rhythmical flow" etc., etc., etc. . . .

HIGHWAY 66

Montage Notes for a Documentary Film

"Rjechevsky has the virtue, his aims being limited, to pose problems bravely before the director; he determines the emotional content and the sense of the film without determining the visual contours."—*Pudovkin*.

- Limp cities alike in their escapes
and conquests
- Concordant traffic
- Dumb hordes long out of work
- Prowling
- Their vigilance confined to passing women
and their bodies
who turn away
- A sudden thrust for space!
from daring offers of recognition
and a vise-like need of them
- And their bodies
- KODAK AS YOU GO!
- SOUTH PENN SQUARE!
- Weeping willows for men
or what's left of them
to dump their past there
- To wallow in, to reflect
and suffer again
their wrinkled history;
- For the police to trample in unconcern
of pilgrims' weariness to begone
. And bedamned!
- DO NOT THROW RUBBISH AROUND!
- A sudden radio pronouncement
- While you're jostled in the street
from the quick perception of
- Apples
- Unemployed who covet the beggars' cup
- Citizens!
- Torsos and ankles
- The undulation of a calve
or breast
calling for a hand
to plumb and survey
- Its greek fecundity!
- Faces
- Prolix and stained
- In format vigilant
- Pouched in decay
- Caloried
- Sticky with time
- Rapt and furrowed
- METROPOLITAN!
- FOUR OUT OF FIVE HAVE IT!
- Shop windows
- unrestrained and lying
- their faces bewildering
- And court-plastered;
- The clangor of "SALE" notices
- The zigzag of "REDUCTIONS" . . .

- "PAY AS YOU EARN!"
- The peering newspapers
preaching their corruption
- In trumpet-grandeur
and lusty conclusion.
- "ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PRINT!"
- A Greta Garbo sign
- Vibrant
- Throbbing to adolescents
-and nomads
stamped down like grapes in sweat
- Its electric hallucination.
- "FLESH AND THE DEVIL"
- Department Stores
- Woolworth the A and P's
- counters busy with wives
- Bargaining
and impatient with unwanted children
who are as reconciled as their parents.
- "Papa Loves Mamma
Mamma Loves Papa
Every Thing is Rosy Now!"*
- Skyscrapers
babbling to God
in their heterogeneous stammer
- And confusing man
and beast
in their braggadocio.
- "Roar of Cities has musical undertone!"*
- The Carnegie Library
- Severe and uninhabited
- Fiction for the Sabbath
- And librarians of ephemeral sex
- "SILENCE PLEASE!"
- The Deposits in the men's room
and axiom of its walls;
- "SOME COME HERE TO"
- 13th precinct
- Cages and complex excrement
- The writing on the wall
- Scratches by men awaiting daylight
- Excavating lice
- And shuddering
- From vermin and the cold
- Scratching, scratching
for others to follow
- Or for the law to erase:
- "Tully Filmus
who left this jail for Joliet!"*
- "They put me here
for ridin' the rods,
I wanted to see things—
Charley "KID" Weisberg"*
- Apartment houses
- Hotel-pimps and gamblers
- Prostitutes

-Kept women smoking the day away
 with rummy
 gin and recount
 of yesteryear's harlotry!
 "A RADIO IN EVERY ROOM!"
 -Speakeasy
 -Women gleam
 and wrest away laughter
 and bewilderment
 -Witness greed and wanton breath
 -Muster wails
 -Set griffins into flight;
 -Taut lovers reprieve themselves
 -And sound new pacts
 -Somehow a cuspidor.
 -Typists and secretaries
 describing their new "thrill"
 and new "ensemble"
 -emerging with desire
 "True Stories"
 read in intervals
 -Of office slack, lavatory duty
 -Subway run.
 -Real estate men, lawyers and clerk
 -Salesmen
 who collect at quick-lunches
 -All the day's routine
 -Automobile-love episodes
 and gaming debts;
 -Then back to an afternoon of dreaming:
 "When I get you alone tonight"
 -Of desperate outwitting
 -Of both.
 "Where will you be at forty?"
 -Arguing students
 -Destroying the past
 -Denouncing the present
 -Despising the "mercenary"
 -All for black coffee
 and a future.
 "Own your own home!"
 -With a bedroom of lust
 -A kitchen of hate and destruction
 -Plush living rooms
 "A dollar down!"
 -Decrepit with cheap wit
 and the moment's wise-cracks;
 -Or
 -Abated with compromise
 until its customers
 go
 -Screaming made
 from silence enforced
 -Or suicide
 from despatched venom.
 The city swallows the sun
 Men hack God into bread.
 "FARM FOR SALE."
 -Farmer's help
 -And family and possessions
 -And second hand car

-Resist the road
 -Trek silently from state
 -To state
 -Envyng cattle their cud
 -And contentment
 -Only resting
 -For shepherd-food
 -And smuggled childbirth
 -Or to rant at the Combines
 -And the "Power"
 which conditioned them.
 "Farm For Sale."
 -In town
 -Farmers auction and barter
 -And families exchange toothpicks
 and hunger
 "When it's springtime in the Rockies"
 -Rivets of concern
 with the withering of crops
 -And unemployment
 -Animal lore
 -The political exploitation
 -And the same feudalism
 next Saturday.
 -Oil wells
 "Where oil has been
 little ever grows again"
 -Ranches and barren mines
 "A fertile region the prairies
 and an obstacle
 to white advance
 with no economy
 and only fit for Indians"
 -Billboards
 -For religion, mountains
 -And the holy word
 -Chalked by a strident bedouin
 -In a mouldy ford;
 "God is Love"
 "Jesus Saves"
 "You are now leaving the incorporated village
 of Eden"
 -All
 -The city, the country
 -All the hitch-hikers' kit
 -The discarded refuse
 for maintenance
 -And excursion
 -The billboards
 -The bourgeois scenery
 -The Highway
 -Aristocratic
 -And imperious
 -Impassive to the worker
 -And imperial!
 "Negro burned by mob"
 "Hunger-marches throughout U. S."
 "STRIKE!"
 The city swallows the sun
 Men hack God into bread.

THE PRODUCTION OF WORKING CLASS FILMS

Film production by workers' groups in a capitalist country is naturally beset with extreme difficulties. With the slender financial resources available to these groups a wide range of technical equipment is practically out of the question.

Does this mean that we should content ourselves with theorising over someone else's films until the revolution places the studios, the equipment and the money in our hands?

Obviously such a policy would make the workers' film groups a mere collection of critics, stifling the creative impulses that are to be found everywhere in our movement.

Whatever the difficulties, we must combine the sociological and technical study of the Soviet films with production work of our own, however crude and fragmentary it may be in the first stages.

We must learn to master, in a practical way, the elements of film production so that when we have the resources after the revolution we shall know how to make use of them.

Although the Workers' Film Movement in Britain is quite young, it has tackled this production problem and has already certain achievements to its credit.

What form of production is possible? I suggest that we can at least make a start with (1) workers' news reels; (2) montage films; (3) documentaries.

Here in Britain we have achieved something—a very little something—in these three forms. We have made three news reels, each about one thousand feet in length. The subjects covered by these reels include the May Day demonstrations, the International Day of Struggle against Unemployment, the strike of the Lancashire textile operatives, and the Unemployed Hunger March.

A single reel montage-film has been made under the title of *Glimpses of Modern Russia*. This entirely consists of cut-outs from Soviet films imported into Britain. The material was collected and fashioned into a rhythmical pattern. The result is a fairly compre-

hensive picture of various phases of life and activity in the Soviet Union today. The cost was negligible.

As a result of a Conference of delegates from the various Workers' Film Societies, a decision was made to produce a somewhat more ambitious effort. It was decided to popularise filmically the Workers' Charter, the militant programs of the revolutionary workers. An outline scenario was prepared and I was given responsibility for its production.

The film—1931 is its title—has now been completed and was received enthusiastically at its first London presentation. 1931 shows how the dockers, the railwaymen, the miners, the textile and steel workers are exploited under the rationalisation attacks of the employers. The imperialist character of British capitalism is emphasised with shots of slave labour in China and the suppression of native revolts by troops and warships.

Shots of unemployed workers at the Labour Exchanges, and the slums where the workers live are contrasted with the luxury pursuits and wealth of the bourgeoisie.

The struggles of the colonial workers are cross-cut with those of the British workers and there is a symbolical sequence urging solidarity with the Soviet Union. Various shots of British workers in action, strikes, marches and demonstrations build up in a rising tempo to the fade-out title, a map of Britain, with the words "THEIR OWN" superimposed.

Difficulties of securing interior scenes of factory and workshop conditions necessitated the borrowing of certain sequences from other films, but a very considerable proportion of the film we shot ourselves with a portable hand camera. The film is entirely documentary; we employed no actors and no studio settings. It runs about 1,600 feet and costs under 50 pounds.

As an experiment, 1931 is valuable, not only for its propaganda content, but because it has taught us that workers' production is possible even with the most limited resources.

STEPHEN CLARKSON

LONDON CINEMA NOTES

The season of the London Workers' Film Society came to an end with a performance at which *The Blue Express* was shown. The society, which is the London branch of the Federation of Workers' Film Societies, began a new season in the fall.

The last programme was particularly notable. The first film was a Chaplin comedy and made interesting comparison with a film prepared by the London Workers' Film Society, called *Nineteen Thirty-One*, which

was the most ambitious effort of the Federation, as it represents an attempt in filmic form to popularize the Workers' Charter. It is documentary and a considerable portion was taken out of doors with only a hand camera. "The film endeavors, necessarily briefly, to emphasize the unemployment, poverty and exploitation of the workers in capitalist England and to show how the Charter is a weapon which the workers have forged in their economic and political struggles."

The brilliant cutting by Ralph Bond, who directed, has resulted in a documentary that is not only remarkable in its power of expression, but valuable as a historical document, and the pride of the members of the Federation.

The final item was the *Blue Express*, and after she had been driven victoriously over the frontier, one left the kino in a state of mind in which admiration for the technique and consideration of the idea were fighting for footage.

The *Blue Express* (sometimes known as *China Express*) is one of the finest examples of Russian technique that the writer has had the opportunity of seeing, and it is hoped that by the time this article is printed, Americans will have had the opportunity of seeing it. It is wonderful. The quick cutting to significant detail is used with more skill than ever before and the musical accompaniment by Edmund Meisel with mixed sound-effects produces an almost perfect harmony of sound and sight. It is the first Russian synchronized film and gives great insight into the almost unconsidered problems of visio-aural coordination. The programme aptly describes the film when

it says . . . "The social importance of the *Blue Express* is equalled by its superb artistic qualities. The technical resources of the director, his inspired symbolism, his profound sense of satire, his rhythmical cutting, his dialectical treatment of the social class-conflicts in China today, have contributed to making the *Blue Express* the most important work from Russian studios during 1930." And one may add that Ilya Trauberg, the director, takes his place with Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, and Room.

There was an interesting repertory season at Stratford, an east London district, where the local censor has taken a sane attitude towards *The General Line*, *Turksib*, *Earth*, *The Ghost that Never Returns*, *Storm Over Asia*, *Men of the Woods*, *Giant Harvest*, and a series of interesting shorts, both new and old. *Earth* is the most recent Russian film to be shown here, but it is not possible to form any fair opinion, as the censor had been peculiarly ham-fisted with his ignorant shears. But the original treatment of an entirely new subject, or rather an old subject from a new approach, makes Dovzhenko as important in the Russian cinema as Ilya Trauberg.

VICTOR P. SMIRNOV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUND

In the Soviet Motion Picture Industry

The development of sound in the Soviet cinema took place in the latter months of 1930 and during 1931. Although Soviet cinematography was able to profit by the machine achievements of the United States (already a veteran in the sound film field), and by the achievements of the younger German sound film industry, nevertheless, it had to go through its own period of infancy and suffer all the ills of that period.

The first steps of the Soviet sound cinematography were timid. But the earlier experiments in sound in the United States and Germany helped the Soviet cinema in shortening this period of infancy, and greatly accelerated its progress.

In 1931 the sound film industry began to train people for the new medium; began to test and select the best Soviet recording systems, and to discover writers whose manuscripts were suitable for sound films.

There are three systems of recording in use in the Soviet Union now: the Shorin, the Tager, and the system devised by the engineers Othotnikov and Marshakovitch. Professor Chernyshev did valuable work with neon lamps, which should also be mentioned.

The fact that some of the best composers of our times—Deshevov, Shostakovitch, and Glier among them—have written for the new sound films, is especially noteworthy. The first two mentioned are internationally known.

Analysis of the production of 1931 shows that Soviet cinematography is fast acquiring experience and mechanical technique equal to that of the advanced nations. The appearance on the sound screens of Western Europe of such films as *Road To Life* with Shostako-

vitch, proves correct the Soviet policy of assimilating foreign experience and developing a Soviet industry of producing sound recording and sound reproducing equipment. The recording in these pictures is little, if at all, inferior in quality to European productions.

Among the important sound pictures to be released in 1931, is the film *Fear*, directed by Room. Its scenario was written by the talented young playwright, A. N. Afenogenov.

In 1931 the number of Soviet sound films, including the synchronized ones, was modest enough; thirty-two were made, of which twelve were features, the other twenty being educational. In 1932, Soyuzkino's schedule calls for a great increase. One hundred sound films will be produced; twenty-five of them features and the remaining of an educational nature. In 1931 there were only 50 sound screens; in 1932 the number of sound screens will reach three thousand.

In spite of the fact that the old motion picture studios of the Soviet Union are not well adapted to the production of sound films, this year will, no doubt, be utilized in filling the gap in sound film technique—the gap that resulted from the late entrance of Soviet cinematography into the sound field. 1932 will see the Soviet cinema brought back to its high standard of artistic quality, which was somewhat lowered during the last years, due to the reconstruction of the industry. This is assured by the enthusiastic response of the Union of Proletarian Writers and Composers to Soyuzkino's appeal to participate in the creation of a new and powerful branch of art that will be accessible to millions of people.

PARIS LETTER

Reasons for Suppressing a Film

G. W. Pabst, creator of one of the truest of war-films, *Four from the Infantry*, (*Comrades of 1918*), made a picture after that old English play of the 18th century: *Beggars' Opera*. And all the critics agreed in lauding its strength, its sincerity, and its tone, which was almost unheard of in the bourgeois cinema, a tone of revolt against poverty, of hope for a life without shackles.

This film is at present being shown in its entirety in Germany and in England, and with no small success. But it will not be seen in France. For the first time, the true reasons for suppressing this picture here have just been revealed and, as usual in such cases, the repulsive stench of police and business "plots" accompanies their announcement. The letter, written by the director of the prefectorial board of censorship to the company which was to release the picture in France, is definite and significant. The following deletions were demanded in this letter:

The delegate of the Prefecture of Police considered "indecent" the showing of a prostitute accosting a man on the street. No doubt, he wishes to see this only on the sidewalks of Paris.

Furthermore, he forbade the showing of a scene in which bribery is clearly established when the jailer tells Mackie Knife, leader of the bandits, that he has manacles at every price and, finally, releases his wrists in exchange for 50 pounds. This episode is considered topical because, recently, in a provincial prison, an inmate was freed through the corruption of several guards.

The delegate of the Ministry of the Interior considered the speech made by the beggars' chief, subversive and unwarranted. Under no conditions can talking pictures mention the hard hearts and sensitive nerves of the rich who are responsible for the misery of the poor (*sic*).

The Foreign Affairs delegate formally opposed showing a close-up of the Queen of England, livid with fear and hiding her face behind a bouquet of flowers as she beholds the beggars. The scenes of the beggars being brutally disbanded by the police did not have to be deleted. Naturally, in a bourgeois film, mass demonstrations can be shown only if participants are massacred and beaten by the "defenders of law and order." That is the safest policy.

The line would also have to be cut in which Mackie Knife states that an ex-police official will always make a good bank director, because there have been so many prefecture employees and even retired Prefects of Police who have become bank administrators.

In agreement with the firm's executives, Pabst refused to make these cuts which would have taken all meaning away from his film, and he invited the entire French Parliament to a private showing of *Beggars'*

Opera. A goodly portion came. No one found any objections, but the ban was not raised.

A few days later, the distributing firm, Warner's French branch, was notified that the board of censors would give its visa to none of its films. M. Ginistry, dramatist and president of the board of censors, declared: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has requested that we systematically deny this firm our visa, by way of retaliation against one of its films, at present being shown on the screens of America, *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, a film definitely aimed against the good name of France."

This chastisement was revoked after a short time, but *Beggars' Opera* still was not permitted.

This is the situation in France. Therein lies a confession of failure. When, after sixty years of "democracy," the leaders of a country are reduced to emasculating a film, for fear that the masses might find in it some encouragement toward a supreme revolt, one can conclude that they are condemning their own creation and admitting that they are unable to retain governmental power in any manner other than police dictatorship.

Soviet Films in France

The treatment given Pabst's picture can give only a weak idea of the systematic manner in which Soviet films are boycotted in France. Still, through the relations of the French director, Abel Gance, at the Quai d'Orsay, it is possible that some of them may be authorized for public showing. In this way, *Along the Quiet Don*, made by Olga Preobrajenskaya, director of *The Women of Riazan*, has been shown at Studio 28, a small avant-garde house. But this is obviously not what might have been hoped for. Needless to say, the admirable Russian films are not meant for a few snobs and esthetes, but for wide, general audiences which might profitably come to know their lessons of beauty and culture. In that, too, France is considerably behind the other nations.

Elsewhere, despite an imperialism and a hatred of the Soviets in no wise inferior to those of the French bourgeoisie, such masterpieces as *Potemkin*, *Soil*, *October*, and others, the true classics of the screen, have been recognized and authorized for general release. In France, they are not even submitted to a board of censors whose answer is so certain beforehand. How can we forget that, after the "subversive" passages of Pudovkin's great film, *Mother*, were deleted, the film was only one-half of its original length?

According to late announcements, *Old and New*, heretofore suppressed, will be run at Studio 28, too. But here is another beautiful example of the hypocrisy of the stalwart guardians of our virtue: the film will not be shown under its real title, which has become too well-known. Instead, it will be authorized only if titled *The Struggle for the Land*.

"MUSTAPHA!"



"THE ROAD TO LIFE"
A SOVIET SOUND-FILM

Directed by Nikolai Ekk

Produced by Mezhrabpomfilm at
Studios of Leningrad, U. S. S. R.



“THE ROAD TO LIFE”



HOLLYWOOD AND MONTAGE

The Basic Fallacies of American Film Technique

In its long plundering career, Hollywood has debauched many beings and many things.

Among the things corrupted by Hollywood must be mentioned, first and foremost—the cinema. Under this term we may include such closely integrated factors as: film-technique, film-ideology, the whole conception and philosophy of the purposes, forms and structural problems of cinematography.

This new art was in a fair way to being analyzed and correctly exploited by Griffith many years ago, but the development of the big production-companies along opposite lines, their growth into a mammoth, octopus-like racket, and other coincident developments in the life of post-war capitalist America—the “racketeerizing” of the whole nation under the dictatorship of the biggest racket of them all, Big Business,—all this crushed, side-tracked, and otherwise defeated the first film-experimentalist, that is to say, the first *creator* that America had.

Added to these forces was the fact that Griffith himself, having no solid, well-planned ideology, either in the social or in the cinematic sense, was totally unable to resist their onslaught, and in more ways than one he relinquished the opportunity to preserve the important things he had started: he betrayed the American cinema.

Griffith came first; Hollywood—the “industry”—came afterward. We should be understood in a strictly materialistic sense when we say that Griffith was *spiritually* and *intellectually*, as well as economically, unequipped to combat the invasion of the barbarians and half-baked technicians who flooded Hollywood after him.

Nevertheless, without minimizing Griffith's tragic failings, it is doubtful whether in America, after the year 1921, any one man, and possibly any group of men, could have realized in practice what we understand today as “the modern cinema.” We must qualify this, of course, by saying that this would have been impossible *within* the industry itself. What could have been done *outside* the industry, with very humble financial means, but with a maximum application of effort and creativity,—this is a different story, and it merely reminds us again of how many of the bourgeois “film creators” of America, with their wealth and prestige, have been the basest traitors to the cinema. Their pride, consisting of their commercial aspirations, their high-flown social life, their impulse toward an existence of moral degeneracy and mental ease, plus other factors which we may discuss on another occasion, conflicted again and again with their sporadic attempts, sometimes strong, sometimes feeble, to aid the cinema.

Moreover, the wearisome, unequal struggle of such

men as F. W. Murnau, Robert Flaherty and Von Stroheim, against the stupidity, tyranny, ignorance and rattlesnake politics which characterize the Hollywood racket, definitely checked whatever constructive influence might have been forthcoming from the best of the intellectuals. In my opinion the defeat of the Swedish director, Victor Seastrom, was the most significant setback in this connection, unless we include the recent rejection of Eisenstein.

There have been opportunities of giving to the broad masses of the country the rudimentary practises and principles of a modern advanced cinema. If these opportunities had been taken advantage of independently (under private financing) since the days of Griffith's major creative work, the task for the proletarian cinema in America would be much easier today. There would not now be the gap between the extreme non-filmic construction of the Hollywood product on the one hand, and the realization of a dialectical montage-structure on the other.

But the crushing of first-rate men like Flaherty and Seastrom, who fought the barbarians in a fight lost from the start, was not in itself a basic cause. It was merely a dialectically inevitable result of an entire process of corruption and decay. The “fruits” of this process are manifest in the present wholesale disintegration.

Today the Hollywood bourgeois film speaks and screams aloud, but there is a death-rattle in the sound. A spurious form of film-technique, which has not been created suddenly but has evolved over a period of years, is used to keep the industry alive. Its mass of employees are destitute as never before, while even the few on top, who grabbed everything during the departed prosperity-epoch, are trembling on their thrones.

A rotting corpse, it relies on artificial respiration to keep going.

The decay of so vast an affair as the American screen can, of course, be traced to a considerable variety of fundamental causes. Most of these will be found in the history of capitalist economy in the United States and intimately associated with the social and political development of the American bourgeoisie as a class.

It should be noted that my interpretation of the cinema is based on my adherence to the principles of dialectic materialism. I have consistently attacked any point of view that seeks to explain the cinema as an isolated artistic phenomenon unrelated to such things as class-control of society, national economy, etc., in conditioning the minds of masses. And so, as regards the pitifully ineffective minority of talented technicians in Hollywood (directors, cameramen and writers),—I am not in the least overlooking the materialistic basis of

Hollywood's degeneration. Fundamentally, in the deepest dialectical sense, the basic causes of the stupidity, ignorance and tyranny of the American film-industry are indissolubly connected with the Marxian causal factors.

The whole mountain of celluloidal rubbish heaped up under the electric sign, "HOLLYWOOD," is a dialectical product, a crazy but inevitable monument, of the decayed culture of the American bourgeois class. No wonder, then, that in the final stage of capitalist society, when world capitalism has already begun its mad plunge downward, Hollywood's movies are eagerly sought by "tired business-men" to release them a moment from their sorrow!

The existence of an institution through a period of time need not signify progress; it may indicate retrogression. On one hand, the Soviet cinema in seven years has advanced to a condition of artistic conquest that no one had ever dreamed of, not even the venerable old Elie Faure in his *Art of Cineplastics*, nor such superficial, muddle-headed art-critics as Gilbert Seldes, whom we now perceive to have been captivated by the decadent *avant garde* cinema of France. On the other hand, there is the "film" developed by Hollywood. Degenerative impulses from the beginning; misunderstanding of the basic principles of film-form; relentless abuse and persecution of the small minority of useful and creative men involved (Seastrom, Flaherty, Stroheim, Dupont, Murnau); extension of false technique; growth and deliberate encouragement of technical creative methods (cutting, photography, direction and scenario-writing) that are essentially non-filmic and that have been obviously inspired by purely commercial exigencies during the industry's periodic panics.

The Hollywood technique of today is a mirage greatly admired by certain bourgeois film-producers and even by some of the "advanced" theorists of Europe, particularly of France. The French group, for example, freely admit the accidental, crazy technique of the American film, but they find in the product itself a certain mechanized good-natured *élan* that is missing in their own lives. It is therefore possible for them either to ignore the technique or to find in "accident" a source of virtue—never mind at the expense of how many thousands of Hollywood's wage-slaves who periodically pay the highest price for these directorial "accidents"—and so they have propagated throughout Europe a hybrid-American conception of the cinema that is really quite attractive to many bourgeois esthetes. Happily, the mirage is even at this very moment beginning to grow dim on the horizon, and between the growing proletarian thunder at home and the death-rattle noise of the American talkie across the sea, the bourgeois esthetes of Western Europe who for some years have sung hymns of praise to the corruptive capitalist film from Hollywood, are finding that their chorus is already a trifle out of date.

In this paper I wish to trace and analyze the degeneration of American film-technique. In some ways it is wrong to speak of "degeneration," but if we take Griffith and certain isolated achievements after Griffith (for example: *Greed*, *Moana*, *The Wind*) as the

high marks of attainment on this side of the Atlantic, we shall be able to judge everything else accordingly. Of course, the moment we say "Griffith," we evoke instantaneously the more fundamental montage-system of the Soviet directors, who developed Griffith's elementary discoveries to their logical conclusion. But in this instance, for purposes of historical review and in order to obtain a proper perspective on the present film situation in America, we shall use only the more general and elementary principles of Soviet film-ideology as a means of comparison and definition.

FILM TECHNIQUE IN HOLLYWOOD

Today false methods of film technique obtain to a far greater degree in Hollywood, and are more desperately adhered to by the directors and "master" technicians of the American film-industry, than at any previous period. The essential reason for this is: *overcapitalization of the industry and the tyrannical use of power by the controlling interests have driven experimentation out of the studios or underground, and even the best directors, irrespective of what ingenuity they may possess, must conform to outworn and illogical conventions.*

The photography of the Hollywood product is in itself a summary expression of a false, romantic, bourgeois outlook on life and the American scene. But it is in *cutting*, in the editing-process, that we find the greatest source of Hollywood's corruption of film-technique. In this sphere, experimentation of even the most elementary nature—by experimentation we mean creative activity, the seeking of new expressive forms, the action of the artistic intellect—is denied to the makers of films. In its place stand certain *myths*, certain *falsehoods*, of film-construction.

Even if it were not for the low, moronic substance of Hollywood pictures, the predominance of these falsehoods, the conviction of the majority of the directors that these false methods are the correct methods of filmic construction, would alone absolutely forbid any intention of assigning a place to the Hollywood product among genuine film accomplishments.

Here, for example, is an incomplete "catechism" of the lies and illusions in which the Hollywood producers place their faith:

1. If a director has been "trained" in the cutting-department, he is *ipso-facto* a "wise" director and a "master" of montage. (This half-truth emanates from the well-known case of Milestone. I shall discuss the connection of Milestone with American cutting-methods later.)
2. When no other means of transition between the shots suggests itself, use a "lap dissolve."
3. The "lap dissolve" is useful at all times as a means of *smooth visual flow*. (In this error alone may be found the key to the technical degeneration of the American film.)
4. The function of film-photography is to please the eye. This function is valid regardless of the dramatic and montage requirements of the subject for harsh or otherwise "unpleasant" (subjectively speaking) photography. (From this we can see that the cameramen, whose art-tradition stems from sentimental and romantic still-photography, have more than a big share in the corruption of cinematography. Their bastard influence has spread throughout the world, infecting even the best of the European cinema.)
5. In the sound-film, the basis of each scene is the talk itself—the dialogue.

6. When it is desirable to "quicken" the audience's attention, use "fast cuts." (This doctrine is one of the most pernicious features of American film-technique at the present moment. It automatically destroys the whole conception of filmic unity and collective montage. (See *Street Scene*, *American Tragedy*, *Front Page*, etc.)
7. Use "interesting," "clever" and "startling" angles whenever possible to stimulate the audience and to call attention to the virtuosity of the cameraman.
8. The detail-closeup, the objectification-closeup and other closeups used for purposes of intensifying the montage-structure, except only when the faces of players are shown in closeup, have the function of, and are designated as, "inserts." They are not considered an intrinsic, vital unit of the montage-structure.
9. The background, especially if it is an outdoor scenic of the picture post-card variety, must always be photographed "pleasingly," "smoothly," (even if its purposes be "weirdness," "starkness," "coldness," etc.). The purpose should be to bring out the *photographic composition*. Never mind the overtone qualities, related to the montage-form as a collective whole! It is much more important that the photographer should show off that he knows "composition;" he will be sure to get a job on the next production. in that case.
10. *Excess footage*: this is the term used by the American producers to denote all the vital material that makes it possible to build up the structure of the continuity to points of high tension. By "excess footage" they mean any shot, or series of shots, whose connection with the material as a whole is not superficially obvious or literal, and whose function in the picture is purely filmic or subjective, instead of in the direct course of the action-narrative. Thus, they destroy the montage of their films by eliminating, or by not shooting at all, images that seem to be *incidental* to the upbuilding of atmosphere, mood, tone, etc., but that are actually of the greatest psychological importance. All this vital, significant image-stuff they call "*excess footage*." Examples later.
11. Closely connected with the above idiocy of American film-production is the ignorance concerning the use of "still" shots (pauses) or shots of arrested motion: e.g., objects, still-compositions, motionless images used for purely symbolical or cine-structural purposes. They do not know the value of the still shot, but consider it to be either "excess footage" or a "drag" on the tempo of the film. They imagine that any shot in which there is no motion is automatically "dead material." With this false idea firmly implanted in their "minds," the American producers prove conclusively that they know nothing whatever about the construction of tempo and rhythm in films.

As already stated, the foregoing fallacies and corrupt notions of film-technique (that is, what Hollywood calls "film-technique"), give only a partial, and by no means satisfactory, idea of the *mass* of stupidities in the name of which the American producers "construct" (read: destroy, murder) their films. But the above list, at any rate, indicates the calibre of the Hollywood film-mentality, and he who masters these obvious half-truths and contradictions is considered to have a "background" in "pictures" and is said in Hollywood to possess a "picture-mind."

To understand more fully the inimical character of these fraudulent concepts on which every film-production in Hollywood is based, and to realize how their *traditionalizing* has cheated the masses of movie-goers out of a rich esthetic experience, and incidentally effected a wholesale corruption of cinema in the Western world, it is necessary, first, to examine briefly the essential points of the most important theory of film-construction in the history of the art and, second, to analyze the salient construction-methods of Hollywood in the light of this theory.

MONTAGE

Nearly everyone today, even among the lay public, knows that after a film has been shot, it is assembled in the cutting-room where the individual shots or "takes"—closeups, long shots, medium shots, etc.—are pasted together in the order of their continuity or sequence thus forming one continuous strip of celluloid. This "continuity" (in reality, a succession of still-photographs), is formed, or *built up*, on the basis of the logical order of the time and space of its separate pieces.

This time and space, however, is filmic time and space, not real, or actual, time and space. The film, as we say, *has its own reality*. And the film has this autonomous filmic reality to the extent it departs from the norm of actual reality. As an example, consider the power of the film to *concentrate* its spatially separated scenes and also to *eliminate* transitional or intermediary steps in the projection of *filmic-time*.

In Griffith's *Intolerance*, to take an exceedingly impressive instance, four stories, each supposedly occurring in a different section of the world (Babylon, old Jerusalem, the France of the Huguenots and a modern American city), are flashed on the screen in a continuity of parallel and simultaneous action.¹

Another instance of the projection of filmic-time: the film may show a man entering a house, and in the very next shot, it may show the man leaving the house several hours or several years later, establishing the passage of time by inference, antecedent or subsequent, or by any device which has been calculated to be the logical one at this point of the film-structure. If the director's judgment fails to supply him with the logical image, he may resort to the standard expedient of unimaginative directors: a subtitle.

An important illustration of a method by which time can be "mounted," may be seen in the Ukrainian film, *Two Days*, made by a young Russian director, Stabavoj.

A bourgeois family is shown fleeing from a mansion.

Through the other end of town, the Red troops are advancing *en masse*.

After a violent succession of scenes of the fleeing family and the conquering army, Stabavoj causes the tempo of the film to lessen.

The action relaxes in its fury; movement diminishes in the individual shots; and, finally, a close-up is flashed showing the ornamented iron gate at the entrance to the family's home.

A hand places a Red flag on top of the gate.

The hand withdraws.

But the camera continues to focus on the gate and the Red flag.

¹ Technically considered, this citation from *Intolerance* is equally valid as an illustration of the power of time-concentration and time-montage, but I have quoted it here with reference to the treatment of *space*. However, it is more celebrated for the montage of time. Even the broad masses of people who have seen this tremendous film, without knowing a thing about film-technique, have marvelled at the violent parallelisms of the modern locomotive racing across the landscape and the massed chariots of Cyrus sweeping over the desert toward Babylon. The equal of this has not been achieved in the subsequent fifteen years of American cinema.

We are led to expect a change of shot, but, instead, we continue to gaze at this relatively motionless close-up of the Red flag.

Fully fifteen to twenty seconds (a long time in screen action) pass before anything happens. And then, imperceptibly at first, the Red flag dissolves slowly—almost sadly, it seems!—into the white flag of the counter-revolutionary armies!

In a single carefully developed dissolve, without a change of camera-placement and with no organic spatial motion, a lapse of time and a drastic reversal of situation are conveyed to the spectator.

These incidents have been cited as examples of *continuity*, of the possibilities and variations of *continuity-treatment*, but, as a matter of fact, they cannot be thought of, from a technical and esthetic point of view, in terms so simple and superficial. To define the methods of continuity utilized to weld the film into an artistic, structural whole, the Russians have taken from the French a word that in the last two years has created immense excitement and considerable anguish in the Western world, especially in Hollywood. I refer, of course, to the word "montage." As unfamiliar as this term is to many people in America in connection with the creative problems of the motion picture, it is a relatively simple matter to explain its meaning.

To mount a film means, broadly speaking, to *organize* it in a logical order of continuity. But it means more than this. The montage of a film implies certain definite ideas of cutting with respect to the internal relationship of its parts. For example: the proportioning of sequences on the basis of (1) the *number* of shots required to build up each sequence and (2) the *length* of each particular shot in relation to the length of every other shot. These two considerations lead directly to the establishment of *tempo*, *rhythm* and general *lines* or *tendencies* of movement.

The reward for the correct building-up, or montage, of tempo in a scene of great emotional power, or for the montage of a strong, irresistible rhythm in a sequence of mass-action and many conflicting currents of movement (as, for example, the massacre sequence in *Potemkin*) is the evocation of intense emotional response from the audience.

It would leave too serious a gap to omit one consideration of the montage-process that is more advanced and that is, perhaps, of even deeper significance.

Specifically: the montage of images which have no external, or subjective connection, but whose *objective* (meaning) connection is decisive. In such connections of images, regardless of the unifying process by Eisenstein's "conflict basis" of images, or by Kuleshov's early "brick-upon-brick" connection process, the elements of time and space do not enter into consideration. The following simple example from the opening

sequence of the Soviet film *In Old Siberia* (*Zuchthaus Nach Sibirien*) directed by Raismann, is important:²
Main Title:

1. Siberian sky.
2. Partial dissolve into aurora design on insignia of Greek Catholic Church. *This design gradually overspreads the entire sky and the sky finally dissolves out.*
3. Dissolve into composition-shot of a group of church buildings.
4. Dissolve into huge tower of Greek Catholic Church.
5. Dissolve into huge Christ figure.
6. Dissolve from Christ figure into group of prison buildings.
7. Dissolve into a different group of prison buildings.
8. DIRECT CUT to long-shot of a gloomy prison and a snow-waste in Siberia.
9. Perspective shot of a line of prisoners marching across the frozen waste, silhouetted against bleak Siberian sky.

There are very important conclusions to be drawn from the above continuity. For one thing, note that the lap dissolve is not used here as a slipshod connective of shots, having no filmically logical reason for its existence. But it is employed as a means of suggesting to the spectator the *objective* connection between the various elements (prisons, churches, facades, religious symbols.) The dissolve of one into another is an implied association which would be either lost or very unclear if direct cuts were used.

But, at the end of this group of shots (1-7), occurs a direct cut after a whole series of dissolves into the culmination-shot (the prison on the snow-plain) to which all preceding seven shots are related as a *collective unit*. And the prison itself is the main setting of the story.

This use of the dissolve is a radically different thing from the nonsensical use or rather, misuse, of dissolves in pictures of Hollywood, where we see one room "melting" into another, or a man walking from one room to the next in a "lap dissolve" for which there is no logical filmic reason except that the director and the cutter did not know how to build the continuity.³

Another important observation to be made from Raismann's continuity is the minimum time-element and space-element involved in the transition from one image to the next. These elements are present, but only in the broadest sense. We know that it is Siberia, that it is in the time of the Czar, that there is a significant connection between Greek Catholic Church and Czarist

² This is one of the least important of the Soviet films, but one which nicely suits our purpose of analyzing an elementary example. We need not go to Eisenstein or to Dovzhenko at this stage of analysis, since the construction of "non-match" images in their films is undertaken on an entirely different theoretical basis—that of purely overtone and intellectual-symbolical imagery along lines of "conflict" and "synthesis" respectively. Raismann is one of the youngsters among Soviet producers, and we could even choose examples from Kuleshov, the pioneer of Russian directors, whom Eisenstein has termed "theoretically quite antiquated." We do not need to travel to the farthest terminal of the left cinema-line in order to provide examples that, by contrast, show how backward Hollywood really is.

³ The most conspicuous misuse of the lap dissolve occurs incessantly in the pictures of one of the worst American directors: Josef "von" Sternberg. It would make too long a digression to relate all that this man does not know about film-construction and direction, but his recourse to endless series of dissolves gives us a cue to the basis of his perverse idea of the cinema. In one of his recent pictures, *Dishonored*, he used so many dissolves that the film became optically tiresome, entirely apart from the poor direction, etc. One shot melted into another, and this process was kept up relentlessly, without stop, until the picture was a confusion of mixing, dissolving, inter-melting scenes and it was sometimes difficult to determine which was which. This, of course, was an extreme misuse of a false method which even the better-informed directors use in all their films.

prison. The atmosphere of gloom, oppression, tyranny, dominance of the church, etc., is very strongly conveyed. And as concerns the symbolical value of the images (the church insignia, the Christ figure, etc.) after seeing this picture, I made the following note, which I have incorporated in my essay, *Principles of the New World-Cinema*:

"To operate as a symbol in an explicit symbol-relationship, an image need not be temporally (film-chronologically) or spatially (film-geographically) connected with other images that precede or follow it . . . This *summation* montage, which opens the film, consists of elements (prisons, churches, facades, religious symbols, etc.) which have no geographical connection with each other or with the action projected, but which are coordinated as essential elements in the *explicit* symbol-relationship formulating the association of church and prison (*oppression in old Siberia*)."

And I added that, with almost the solitary exception of Griffith (in his earlier days), this is a phase of the montage of symbols entirely unknown to American picture-makers.

From these few simple examples we can realize: (1) the significance of montage as the one unifying factor in filmization and (2) the importance of montage-ideology as a method of dialectical analysis of film-construction. (Cine-analysis.)

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to mention that the examples we have offered hardly begin to give an idea of the vast and rich attainments of the Soviet cinema to date in the creation of new, significant montage-forms.

According to Pudovkin,

montage is "the logic," "the structural principle of film-language"—Film Grammar.

According to Eisenstein,

montage is the mathematics of film-construction, the dialectical principles governing the dynamics of film-form—Film Dialectic.

And both Eisenstein and Pudovkin have emphasized, again and again, that montage does not mean, and is not of necessity intrinsically identified with, quick, shortly-cut flashes of scenes pieced together in rapid succession. In their films as well as in theoretical evaluations, they have shown it to be the *forming* principle that conditions and governs the final unity of the film, investing the whole structure of the picture with the logic of image-associations that the multiplicity of montage-devices makes possible.

Obviously, when viewed in this light, the film assumes the seriousness and complexity of formal method associated with any other major form of expression, and it becomes, even more than music, something to be scientifically studied.

Systematic study of the cinema is a procedure entirely unknown to the chaos-minded movie directors and cameramen of Hollywood. But in the U.S.S.R., a film-university (the Moscow Kino Technikum) has been established for the purpose of thorough study and research of the motion-picture.

A point even more important in this connection, however, is the relation between montage and cutting. Several of the most prominent Soviet directors have valiantly endeavored, in their technical writings on the subject, to make it clear to the Western world that montage does not *mean* cutting, although

manifestly it *cannot be achieved without resort to the physical operation of cutting*.

Up to a few years ago, the American directors used to pride themselves on their ability to edit (mount) their films in a way that compelled the attention of the audience. We may expose this fallacy in passing. Generally, the stupidity of American directors, a stupidity beyond description, was covered up by the clever work of an obscure cutter who had a better sense of the filmic structure than the director and who was, therefore, permitted to earn \$25.00 a week for his knowledge as against hundreds of dollars or more per week that the director got for his ignorance.

Moreover, the excessively limited knowledge of the cutters themselves—remarkable beside that of the directors, but pathetic beside that of the Soviet technicians—never really entitled the American movie-crowd to toot their horns so loudly about their editing abilities. They understood *editing*, i.e., a certain ingenious assembling of the shots to make the picture "flow smoothly." And they knew it better than the Germans or the Swedes, and better than the French commercial directors. *Montage*, however, the revolutionary creative extension of the editing-process, they have never known as a group and known but superficially in single cases.

It was characteristically brazen of the shyster-directors of Hollywood to pretend that they had attained the "highest mastery" of the cinema of any group on earth, but this sophism has been sufficiently punctured by superior Soviet accomplishments. What has not been sufficiently emphasized is the fact that whatever artistic accomplishments the American film can show during at least the first ten years of its existence, especially by way of *montage*, are either the achievements, or the imitation of the achievements, of one man. And we have already seen that Griffith, even though he towered far above anyone else in the epoch dominated by his name, failed basically. But Griffith at his best distinctly knew how to "cut"—indeed, how to *mount*—along at least metrical lines, and sometimes in a startling way prophetic of Eisenstein's overtones. (*Broken Blossoms*.)

Even in his two-reeler, *The Massacre*, produced in 1910, five years before *The Birth of a Nation*, Griffith created a rotation of sharply conflicting long shots and closeups, in the climax, which could not be questioned from the standpoint of simple metrics (length of the images, progressive acceleration of tempo, etc.) This was "cutting" with a vengeance! In fact, it was *montage*, and every American director and cutter means precisely this when he talks—so superficially, so stupidly—about knowing how to "cut" a film. But the American crowd since Griffith, with the same accidental exceptions as heretofore noted (mostly drifting in from other countries where Griffith's pictures were *studied*), knows nothing *beyond* this elementary A-B-C metrical conception of film-montage. And the ignorance today is greater than ever, for the talking film has caught the Hollywood crowd intellectually unprepared to meet its far more complex—and more problematic—demands, so that even those wise, wise "experienced" directors, the long-term job-holders from the silent era, give ever-increasing evidence of their inability to handle the themes they are confronted with.

To complete this picture of Hollywood's senile decay, we have only to look at one classical example from the continuity of a Soviet film to perceive how, even in the field of *elementary metrical cutting*, the Hollywood movie directors have failed to master, in any sense of the word, the medium which they have so viciously degraded. This section of a sequence in Dovzhenko's *Arsenal* will enable us to decide conclusively whether in Hollywood they have a right even to mention the word "montage":

- 749 Interior of an empty room. The Bolshevik and the Menshevik face each other at some distance.
- 750-761 A series of constantly enlarging closeups of the two opponents.
- 762 The Menshevik points his revolver.
- 763 Street fighting outside.
- 764 The Menshevik points . . . aims.
- 765 The street. Bolsheviks gaining.
- 766 The little Bolshevik walks over to the wall. He stands with his face to it. Waits. Suddenly he turns . . .
- 767 Bolshevik troops racing over the snow. At furious speed. City-ward.
- 768 The little Bolshevik advances to the center of the room, squarely facing his opponent.
- 769 Red troops rounding a bend in the road. Toward the city.
- 770 The Menshevik takes aim.
- 771 Bolshevik soldiers on the run.
- 772 Red troops gaining.
- 773 Totality shot of city street (from high angle above). Terrible confusion. Red troops pressing ahead.
- 774 Totality shot interior room. (Taken from above). The Bolshevik and the Menshevik face to face. The Menshevik trembles as he points his gun at the Bolshevik.
- 775 Closeup of Menshevik's hand (three-quarter range). Bolshevik enters picture-frame from opposite side of cadre.
- 776 Closeup Menshevik.
- 777 Closeup Bolshevik.
- (The Bolshevik) "Can't you do it looking in my eyes?"
- 778 Closeup Bolshevik. (Cut-back 777).
- 779 Closeup Menshevik, frightened.
- 780 Closeup Bolshevik, fierce.
- Title:* (The Bolshevik) "I can."
- 781 Closeup revolver in Menshevik's hand. The Bolshevik suddenly seizes the revolver by the muzzle.
- 782 Closeup Menshevik. His right forefinger is still crooked as if it were still pressing the pistol-trigger. It makes a reflex-movement, pulling an imaginary trigger in space. It repeats the motion a few times while the Menshevik stares, blankly.
- 783 Closeup Bolshevik. He raises the pistol and levels it at the Menshevik.
- *784 Closeup Menshevik. He gulps. 27 frames.
- **785 A pile of exploded, smoking shells. 36 frames.
- *786 Totality shot of room, taken from above. The Menshevik lies dead on the floor. The Bolshevik stands over him with smoking pistol. No movement. Smoke fades off . . . 113 frames, including a 21-frame fade-out.

In another article I characterized this as a "fiery, Heraclitean continuity," emphasizing the "intoxicating interplay of conflicting elements (collision of shots, collision of angles, collision of tempos, collision of

sizes, collision of movement-forms, etc.) culminating in the image of shells *already exploded*" . . . "development of actions and lines of movement unified in a single synthetic impulse" . . . actions "converging in one impulse toward the climax-image of the whole unit (**785)" . . . "*a dialectical solution of movement-progressions*."

And it is needless to point out the clarity of Dovzhenko's image-structure, its compelling force, its simplicity of motion-line.

Needless, too, to mention that the Soviet cinema offers an astonishingly large number of similar instances which, even in the most elemental spheres of construction, beat Hollywood at its own game.

As a matter of fact, montage, that is to say, the whole point and essence of the motion picture—is a stranger that can hardly be said to have been won over by Hollywood's gold.

There remains only one point to complete our outline of the conception of the cinema that prevails in the Soviet Union. The Russian directors do not "cut" their films. They do not "break up" their scenes, to use the stock-in-trade Hollywood expression.

They regard the cutting-process rather as an *assembling-process*, and the division of the master scenes into long shots, closeups, etc., not really as a division, but as a *geometric building-up* and unification of vital elements inherent in the scene, and they emphatically, and with irrefutable logic, maintain that this assembling-process and this building-up is *the logical continuation of the director's function after he leaves the set where the scene was photographed*.

Having already begun to create a reality (film-reality) on the set and on the field, they ask why should the director now abandon his half-formed microcosm, the film, at this vital point, where the multitudinous fragments of his creation require to be organized and coordinated in their delicate, complex relationships of time and space and psychological associations?

So much for the general aspects of the theory and conception of cinema which the Russians have evolved. I have merely sketched it, regretfully forcing myself to omit its deeper aspects, its various radical, left-wing schools (Vertov, Eisenstein, Kaufman, etc.) and its profound and startling contributions to the physiological theory of esthetics and emotion.

In the next issue of *Experimental Cinema* I shall present in review the standard methods, traditions and "ideas" of the American bourgeois cinema and see how they measure up to the system of *montage-logic* that has just been discussed.

Hollywood: Sales Agent of American Imperialism

Continued from page 20

patriots of 1868,—the majority of them were slave-owners,—was to declare their Negroes free. So, in both wars of independence, 1868 to 1878 and 1895 to 1898, Negroes and whites fought for liberty, shoulder to shoulder, against the tyranny of Spain, their secular enemy.

So we do not have that terrific racial antagonism.

But things are changing, owing to the Hollywood pictures and to the Cuban youth in America. In American films, Negroes are cowards, superstitious, dumb or at least a ridiculous entity, nothing but serfs. There is not a single shot of Negroes like Langston Hughes' workers and students, who after a brilliant graduation from some university cannot get anything but a job in

a Pullman, shining the shoes of the great "senores," the bosses, or cleaning spittoons.

This depiction of their race has evidently affected the Negroes' confidence in themselves, handicapping them in the effort to dominate their *taras*. I expect and hope that the Cuban Negro leaders will advise their brothers everywhere to boycott the American pictures.

The white Cuban has always appreciated the Negro as a human being, having the same right to happiness and consideration as himself. The Cuban Negro has a powerful imagination, a fine sensitiveness, and he is a quick and clever thinker. His individual and class development is astonishing. In the public school, in the Provincial Institutes,—there are six of these, one in every Province, and they are equivalent to high schools in the U.S.A.,—as well as in the National University,* the Negro students often get the highest honors and are the best exponents of learning and are deeply esteemed and admired by their white comrades.

What is the attitude of the Cuban critics and intellectuals toward Hollywood films?

Petit bourgeoisie as they are, the Cuban critics and intellectuals are deeply interested in idealistic philosophical schools and other hocus-pocus, most of them suffering from an irremediable spiritual and mental psychosis, being diseased with a rotten social politico-economic conception. They praised such pictures as *The Smiling Lieutenant*, *Strangers May Kiss*, *Anna Christie*, etc., and they either let pass *Storm Over Asia*, *The New Babylon* and *The End of St. Petersburg* without any comment or they charged them with the accusation of "propaganda," as if every art in the world has been anything else but a vehicle to carry on and extend the idea or the message of its author, i.e., propaganda.

Very few of the Cuban critics and intellectuals have seen *Potemkin* or the old American films, like *Way Down East* or *Broken Blossoms*, for instance. They have been interested in the films only for the past five or six years, when European literati began to make so much noise about the new art, "Chaplin the genius," etc., and I do not believe they know anything either about cutting or montage, ignoring the fact that these are the backbone, the very nerve, of cinema art. I do not hesitate in affirming that not one of our esthetes, art critics and intellectuals has heard of Eisenstein's theories of cinematic arts, based on dialectic materialism, the philosophy so deeply hated by them all.

They do not realize that the cinema is in its inner essence dialectic and revolutionary, nor are they aware of Hollywood's terrible miscomprehension of the most authentic values of the cinema, as is evident in its everyday use—I better say *mis-use*—of montage and sound. They have accepted the talkies in the Hollywood way, and those pictures, mere copies or photographs of theatrical pieces—operettas, musical come-

dies, dramas, melodramas—are nothing but manifestations of demodé artistic forms and concepts.

I have said before that the American film is furiously individualistic. It is based on unbridled egotism. But what else is the capitalist system if not a hymn of glorification of the individual, at least concerning matters of appropriation and exploitation? One of the principal differences between the American and the Soviet films is this: the former looks back to the past, trying to perpetuate and maintain it; the latter, with a profound social significance, looks to the future.

To sum up: Every film made in the U.S.A.,—and the U.S.A. is the very essence of capitalism in its final stage,—contains an implicit attack on the proletariat and on those countries that are rich in prime raw materials and in economic possibilities, which the imperialist robbers are seeking. I have never seen projected in an American film the fundamental inequality between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

According to Marx, the arts are based on the economic structure. Nikolai Bukharin in his important work, *Historical Materialism, A System of Sociology*, Chapt. IV, p. 196, says: "Directly or indirectly, art is ultimately determined in various ways by the economic structure and by the stage of development of the social technology."

So, the cinema must express the real sentiments and thoughts of this historical moment, and, being revolutionary, it must work for the destruction of the present social forms. Then it will be in accord with that dialectic and revolutionary essence which I mentioned before. This is what happens in the case of the Soviet films, but not so with the Hollywood pictures, which are fetters, holding up and impeding the development of the new art. There is a sharp contradiction between the purposes for which American Capital is using the cinema and the cinema's inner and authentic essence.

Every class in its dominating period has developed an art of a particular mood or school of art, reinforcing its domination through that art. So the proletariat will develop the cinema and make it fulfill its maximum possibilities.

Controlled by the bourgeoisie for its own benefit and used against the exploited, very soon the cinema will turn itself,—for dialectical reasons,—against the bourgeoisie, helping the proletariat in its inevitable historical rise to power and contributing to put an end to what Karl Marx called "the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society."

—La Habana, Cuba.

* All the Provincial Institutes and the National University the latter founded in 1728, have been closed and suppressed, from September 30, 1930 to the present, by Machado's government because the students bitterly protested against the brutal regime and against American imperialism. Machado, like practically every president of Cuba, is an agent of American imperialism.

HOLLYWOOD BULLETIN

THREE YEARS OF SOVIET FILMS IN HOLLYWOOD

It is now the end of the third year that the films of the Soviet Union have been shown in Hollywood. In little more than three years' time, twenty-nine Soviet pictures, including one made in Germany by a Soviet director, have appeared on the screens of the American film-capital.

The first ones to be shown were *Potemkin* and Taritsch's old film, *Czar Ivan the Terrible*. Both these productions were released almost simultaneously in the winter of 1929. *Potemkin*, according to a report, had been privately shown to members of the American film-industry in Southern California that we have record of, took place in the following year. *Ivan the Terrible* was not so successful as *Potemkin*, but it obviously made a deep impression on those who saw it, for its influence was detectable in a certain Hollywood production shortly afterwards.

After *Potemkin* had been displayed in any number of theatres in and around Los Angeles and Hollywood, came a long stretch when no one heard anything further about Soviet films. But soon rumors began to come across the country from New York, and friends of Russia heard or read stories of the sensational New York receptions accorded such pictures as *End of St. Petersburg*, *Ten Days That Shook the World* and several others.

Pudovkin's powerful film of the Russian Revolution, *The End of St. Petersburg*, was shown in 1929 at a Fox theatre in San Francisco. According to reports, it was received with great enthusiasm and was therefore quickly withdrawn. In the interests, no doubt, of "giving the public what it wants"!

Later that same year, the Filmarte Theatre in Hollywood was renovated and opened under new management. In the beginning this management was content to show revivals of classic American pictures and it succeeded in obtaining prints of such rare pictures as *Intolerance*, *Birth of a Nation*, *Broken Blossoms*, etc., (but, unfortunately, not of *Greed*). Shortly thereafter, someone informed the managers about the Russian films, requesting them to communicate with the Amkino Corporation in New York. Other requests, based on rumors and reports that had reached Hollywood, were brought to the attention of the Filmarte people. The latter opened negotiations with New York, and before long it became the habit of a large group of people in Hollywood to look forward to that sanctified Friday night on which a new one of those strange, startling and generally overpowering Bolshevik films would be shown, with Amkino's trade-mark of the sun rising over the earth as a significant forerunner to the images themselves!

Here is a complete list of the Russian

films shown to date at this theatre, in the order of their exhibition:

1929

POTEMKIN
THE VILLAGE OF SIN
(*Das Dorf der Sunde*)
TWO DAYS
HER WAY OF LOVE
(*Das Weib des Gardisten*)
TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE
WORLD (OCTOBER)

1930

IN OLD SIBERIA
(*Zuchthaus Nach Sibirien*)
ARSENAL
FLAMES ON THE VOLGA
(*Revolt in Kazan*)
THE YELLOW PASS
(*Der Gelbe Pass*)
THE NEW BABYLON
(*Kampf Um Paris*)
OLD AND NEW (THE GENERAL
LINE) (*Der Kampf um die Erde*)
PAMIR (*Expeditionary Film*)
A FRAGMENT OF AN EMPIRE
TURK-SIB
CHINA EXPRESS (THE BLUE
EXPRESS)
LASH OF THE CZAR

1931

SOIL (EARTH)
STORM OVER ASIA
IGDENBU
CITIES AND YEARS
TRANSPORT OF FIRE
AL YEMEN
CAIN AND ARTEM
STORM OVER ASIA (*revival*)
A SON OF THE LAND
THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

1932

A JEW AT WAR
THE ROAD TO LIFE

In addition to the foregoing, *The Brothers Karamazov*, directed in Germany by Ozep (who made *The Yellow Pass*), was recently shown at the California Theatre in Los Angeles and is to be brought to the Filmarte in Hollywood sometime next season.

Thus, twenty-nine Soviet films in all, of which one, *Storm Over Asia*, was run a second time less than six months after its initial showing, have come to Hollywood.

The directors whose work has been represented in this collection of films are: Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, Pudovkin, Ilya Trauberg, Kozinstov, L. Trauberg, Ozep, Victor Turin, Raismann, Ermler, Taritsch, Stabavoj, Preobrazhenskaja, Ekk, and others.

It is a good list, from one point of view—namely, its variety and volume. But on the other hand, it is quite incomplete. The Soviet Cinema is a fertile and productive field of artistic labor. The number of its preeminent films exceeds that of all other nations taken together.

And we have not yet seen the films of Dziga Vertov, Alexander Room, Esther Schub, M. Kaufmann, Lev Kuleshov, or the LEFT-group of Leningrad. Very important productions from the USSR must therefore yet be shown here. Among others: Room's two famous pictures, *Bed and Sofa* and *The Ghost That Never Returns*; Vertov's *Enthusiasm* and *The Man With the Movie Camera*; Kuleshov's filmization of a Jack London story (titled, *Expiation*); Kaufmann's recent picture, *Spring*; and *Alone* (Kozinstov's and Trauberg's new production).

Besides these, the Filmarte Theatre still has the task of trying to secure a print of *The End of St. Petersburg*. The managers of this theatre have made repeated attempts to obtain this colossal picture, but for various reasons all efforts have so far been unsuccessful. One reason is that the picture has been involved in a great deal of litigation in New York, having been withheld from public showing in the past year by Arthur Hammerstein, who bought the American rights to it in Germany.

Hammerstein returned to the United States not having the slightest idea of how to "put over" a film of this type. *St. Petersburg* opened at the Hammerstein Theatre on Broadway on an all-day-run (continuous show) policy. This was a mistake from the start, since the nature of the picture urgently required that it be seen by the audience from the beginning to the end, in sequence, and therefore on definite schedule. The next mistake was the advertising, which was altogether hopeless. The third mistake was the musical score for which Hammerstein hired a complete film-orchestra. This score was utterly out of spirit with the picture, the leader of the orchestra having decided that it would be all right to play the *Song of the Flame* (from one of Hammerstein's operettas) as a theme-piece. And to crown all these tragedies was the circumstance of the geographical location of the Hammerstein Theatre on upper Broadway, somewhat beyond the main theatrical district of New York.

So *The End of St. Petersburg*, because of these and other factors, not the least important of which was the butchery committed by a Federal censor sent up from Washington, D.C., especially for this job, was not the sweeping success in the East that it would have been if more favorable conditions had prevailed. While in Berlin this picture became the rage for two solid seasons, in New York its success was less marked because of the above-mentioned reasons. The result was that Hammerstein lost money on it, and he seemed unable to make up his mind whether or not to road-show it. Amkino then tried to buy the print back. Between Hammerstein's vacillations and the dickering of Amkino, *The End of St. Petersburg* retired modestly into seclusion!

Yet, in spite of this, it ran at the Roxy Theatre, the largest house in New York, where it was held over a second week. In Detroit it ran three weeks at a large Fox house. In other cities its success was proportionate. But after three years we have not yet had the opportunity of witnessing how Hollywood will take to this gigantic film.



‘ ‘ T H E R O A D T O L I F E ’ ’





A "candid camera close-up" of a scene at the banquet of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (of Hollywood, Cal.,) on November 11, 1931. The "candid camera," which "pictures natural character studies of its subjects while they are unaware of its presence," here shows Vice-President (of the U.S.A.) Charles E. Curtis (at right) in a pleasant little chat with his sister, Mrs. Dolly Gann (at left). For those especially interested in the study of "motion picture arts and sciences," it will undoubtedly be valuable information to know that Mrs. Gann wore "a white chiffon gown, exquisitely appliqued with white taffeta medallions embroidered with gold thread. And real orchids." Photo courtesy Los Angeles Evening Herald.

Another "candid camera study" of a scene at the celebrated Academy banquet. Standing, is "Czar" Will Hays, uncrowned emperor of the movie industry, in the midst of an interesting speech on the "progress" of American movies, while the gentleman so visibly asleep (second from left) is none other than Charles Curtis, Vice-President of the U.S.A. The first figure on left, with face upturned toward the speaker, is James Rolph, Governor of the State of California, sometimes referred to as "Sunny Jim" (N. B.—for his wonderful smile). To right of the Vice-President sits Louis B. Mayer, erstwhile ambassador to Turkey-to-be, now High Mogul of M-G-M. Next to him is Mrs. Dolly Gann, the Vice-President's sister, her eyes devoted to speaker Hays. Photo courtesy Los Angeles Evening Herald.



Interesting in this connection is the fact that Pudovkin's other picture, *Storm Over Asia*, proved to be the most popular of all the Russian films shown in Hollywood. It played for two weeks at the Filmarte, packing the house with crowds that received it with enthusiastic applause. This was especially significant in view of the antagonism toward the yellow race that the fruit-capitalists of Southern California have tried to foster among the population of this section.

The fame of *Storm Over Asia* spread throughout the northern district of Southern California, and people came to see it from towns twenty, thirty and fifty miles away,—from Long Beach, Santa Ana, Laguna, Riverside and even from Santa Barbara, ninety miles up the coast. In consequence, it was brought back to the Filmarte six months later for a second run.

The majority of the other Soviet films shown in Hollywood were also very popular. The outstanding successes among these were: *Potemkin*, *Old and New*, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, *A Fragment of an Empire*—extremely successful—*China Express*, *Turk-Sib*, *Her Way of Love*, *Old Siberia*, *The Road to Life*, and *The Five Year Plan*.

As these films continued to be shown, one after another, increasing groups of new people came to see them, while the audiences who had followed them from the beginning came to expect higher standards and more finished results. Such results were not always forthcoming due to the fact that the order in which the Russian films were shown in Hollywood was not coincident with the order in which they had been produced in the US SR. Therefore, it often happened that after an exceptionally wonderful film was shown, a poorer one, which had been produced several years earlier, followed it up. And a number of these poorer pictures were decided failures, both artistically and commercially. Such as: *The Lash of the Czar*, *Cities and Years* and *A Son of the Land*. But there is no doubt that if they had been released three years ago, before *Ten Days*, *Arsenal* and other pictures of a high standard, they would not have been such commercial failures. In this respect, it is interesting to note that *Cain and Artem*, *Al Yemen*, and *Igdenbu*, three pictures of minor significance, were quite popular at the Filmarte, but were very disappointing to the studio-people and intellectuals.

(For details concerning the exhibition and reception of the other Soviet films shown in Hollywood during the past two years, see the *Hollywood Bulletin* in "Experimental Cinema," Nos. 2 and 3.)

THE ACADEMY AND THE CAMERAMEN

The organization which styles itself the "Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences" of Hollywood (I) had a rather hectic time of it in its assignment of awards on Nov. 10. It awarded the various prizes for the year's "artistic" achievements (sic), amid a terrifying gush of ballyhoo and vulgar publicity, the hub of which was the dozing schnozzle of Vice-President (of the U. S. A.) Charlie Curtis. The dinner at which this august personage somnambulistically presided over the Academy's august events need

not be described; only a film (in the manner of Pudovkin's patriotic parade in *The End of St. Petersburg* could convey an idea of its stu-pen-dous cultural importance. On the opposite page you may get a feeble idea of what this beatific banquet was like.

The awards made by the Academy raised a storm. Although few people in Hollywood took the whole circus seriously, the cameramen were aroused. They were incensed over the Academy's selection of the photography of *Tabu* as the "best photographic work" of the year. Their protestations were based on solid reasoning.

Tabu, they claimed, was not a regular studio-made picture. It was produced entirely independent of studio-supervision, and it took approximately two years to complete. Furthermore, they objected, it is easy to shoot a film in the South Sea Islands, where climate, quality of atmosphere and many other material and natural conditions are overwhelmingly in your favor. This is quite a different thing from shooting pictures in a dull, flat-toned real-estate bedlam like Hollywood.

Up to this point the arguments of the cameramen, so wrathful at not having been considered for the coveted Academy "honor," were logical beyond dispute. But there was another angle to their objections, an angle which reveals some illuminating features of the peculiar psychology of the American movie-crowd. These precious photographic geniuses of the Hollywood film-industry were all "hot and bothered" because the photographer of *Tabu*, so they maintained, was not a "recognized" photographer.

Exactly what does this mean? What do they mean when they speak of a photographer being "recognized" or "unrecognized"? Who does the recognizing? By whose standards and by whose law is an "outcast" photographer "not recognized"?

The answer, in our opinion, is quite simple and can be expressed without any technical red tape. A movie photographer is "recognized" in Hollywood when he is socially and economically a member of the cameramen's clique; when he is a member of the cameramen's union (virtually a social club), when he is "one of the boys," as they say; when he plays a good game of poker with his fellow-cameramen, or otherwise "gets in the swim" of their social activities.

Being a "recognized" photographer, according to the cameramen's union, being considered worthy enough to be given awards, honors, mentions, etc., has little, if anything, to do with one's photographic creative abilities. "Creative photographic ability," as a matter of fact, means only one thing in Hollywood: ability to photograph a weeping-willow tree so that it resembles a nineteenth-century pastoral of a quiet English countryside, ability to photograph a baby (ain't-it-cute, etc.), ability to photograph a cross or some other religious symbol with emphasis on its sentimental appeal. This is "creative photography" a la Hollywood.

(To appreciate the extent to which this bogus conception of photography prevails in the American movie-capital, look through any issue of *International Photo-*

grapher. Its pages are filled with sentimental sceneries of willow trees, children on lawns, the cliffs at Laguna, picture-postcard views of interior scenery in Southern California and thousands of other examples of obvious, sentimental, bourgeois photography. Most of these reproductions are the efforts of cameramen engaged in the industry.)

Thus, while on one hand we fully agree with the protests of the Hollywood cameramen against the Academy's award to *Tabu* as far as these protests are based on comparisons between working-conditions on the Murnau-Flaherty production and working-conditions in Hollywood, on the other hand, we fail to see what the status of Murnau's photographer has to do with it. As a matter of principle, we do not understand just where this issue of "recognition" or "non-recognition" comes in. Most Hollywood cameramen are so jealous and so completely flushed with a sense of inferiority when they see a Soviet picture, that they either condemn the picture wildly or shut their eyes to the tremendous power and honesty of Soviet camera-work. They do not "recognize" this camera-work. But does this mean anything? Is Soviet film-photography bad photography, because Hollywood photographers feel injured by the comparison? Certainly not.

The cameramen's union of Hollywood understands very well why it has erected the insuperable barrier of an initiation-fee that ranges from \$750.00 to \$1000.00. The cameramen's clique of Hollywood has no desire to encourage new talent, to afford young creative ability a chance to function. What does it care if there be ten Tises at the gates of Hollywood? If it is moved at all by this fact, it will be moved to crush them and to shut its gates. It does not "recognize" any other photography except its own or that which it sanctions for its own purposes as an exclusive economic clique, regardless of how excellent, how truly wonderful other photography may be. It is therefore simply another manifestation of that narrow, ignorant outlook on the cinematic accomplishments of other nations which seems to be an inveterate characteristic of the Hollywood movie-mind.

THE PROPAGANDA QUESTION

Shortly after our third number appeared, our esteemed contemporary, the *Hollywood Spectator* (formerly the *Film Spectator*) in its issue of September 26, 1931, took space to say a few remarks concerning *Experimental Cinema*, proletarian art and the question of propaganda. The writer stated that he was "suspicious" when he read (in E. C. No. 3) that the magazine would "succeed in establishing the ideological and organizational foundations of an American working-class cinema." And he said that he was "surfeited" when he read comments on 'the American imperialist policy,' 'capitalist propaganda' and 'working-class audiences.' He went on to say that he did not recall "ever having met a man who considered himself permanently a member of the working class. I know many who are undoubtedly members of such a class, but they will bristle at the suggestion. The American as a race is young and optimistic. He is content with the present system because there is fat in it.

If he can not secure the fat, his children will, or his children's children—and they will secure it without the fuss and strife of revolution. That is his dream. A dream may be untrue, but while it endures its potency is unquestionable."

It is precisely because, as the *Spectator* has so clearly stated, the American worker is not yet class-conscious, that *Experimental Cinema* is greatly concerned about the production of workers' films in America and it is, similarly, because we recognize the idiocy and futility of the traditional dream that in America every worker has the chance of becoming rich, that we are earnestly and relentlessly striving to establish in this country a cinema which will analyze and destroy that dream in all its imbecilic aspects.

In this connection we may make the statement that life itself, in the form of depression, hunger and unprecedented capitalist brutality toward the working-class, is helping to burst this bubble. No doubt the *Spectator* is more or less dimly aware of the mass bread-lines of the Eastern and mid-Western cities, of the mass hunger in "sunny California" and of such internationally famous instances of capitalist America's "brotherly attitude" toward its wage-slaves as the incarceration of Tom Mooney, the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti, the massacring of Negroes, mine-workers, etc. But perhaps the *Spectator*, though it may have heard something of the foregoing events (not to be thought of, however, as possible material for a movie-comedy or a bedroom "art" masterpiece), is not yet acquainted with less publicized affairs such as the present reign of terror in Harlan, Kentucky, or the endless number of cases of industrial persecution, stool pigeon espionage, police bestiality and incommunicado imprisonments in the bastilles of America. Possibly—but we have no illusions—if the *Spectator* were even remotely acquainted with some aspects of the class-war that is taking shape beneath the smooth, glittering surface of American "civilization," it would realize to what extent life itself is justifying our cinema ideology and our film production policy. Verily, "a dream may be untrue, but while it endures, its potency is unquestionable." We believe the dream is breaking up now. We merely want to assist in the operation and establish a new "potency" actuated by a different vision of society.

We cannot refrain from quoting a few lines further from the *Spectator's* intriguing rumination. This, for example: "The mass impulse in art, such as *Experimental Cinema* champions, is stultifying and priggish, irrespective of what religious cause it involves."

We have reason to believe that the *Spectator* has little, if any, understanding of what is meant by "proletarian art"; but regardless of what it thinks we mean, does it not occur to the *Spectator* that it is being somewhat hypocritical and two-faced when it attempts to deny "the mass impulse in art" side by side with its orthodox championing of the most grossly standardized and crudely vulgar film "industry" in the world? What has suddenly happened to the *Spectator's* "box-office art"? What has suddenly become of the glorified Hollywood ideal of producing "art" films for twelve-year-old

minds and mental defectives? Truly, our friends, we are "surfeited"!

The *Spectator* concluded its meditation in a rather strange and, we think, contradictory way. It assured its readers that *Experimental Cinema* "will never be read by the working class it seeks to unshackle, but the best minds of Hollywood may make some money out of its suggestions." What an irony that a "suspicious" proletarian film journal should be called upon to supply Hollywood's purported "best minds" with ideas! We would like to know, however, in what way precisely the *Spectator* imagines that the film-ideology represented by *Experimental Cinema* can be grafted on to an opposite system, the Hollywood system? And how does it reconcile its opinion that we cannot be read by the uneducated workers with its suggestion that we can provide the "best minds" of Hollywood with ideas for further accumulation of money? Has the *Spectator* never heard of "educated morons"?

SOVIET STIMULATION IN HOLLYWOOD

In a recent conversation with one of the editors of *Experimental Cinema*, William K. Howard, director of *White Gold*, expressed himself with regard to the Russian cinema. He gave vent to his unbounded admiration of the Soviet productions. He said that they were far and away the greatest films in the world; that they had given an impetus to the cinema, the full effects of which could not be calculated at the present time. He said that up to the time when he first saw Soviet films, his interest in cinema had begun to slacken and he felt that it was hopeless to try to create anything worthwhile—the film and its problems had become sickeningly commercialized and creative activity was utterly impossible in Hollywood. Then came the Soviet product and it stimulated him like an electric shock. He became enthusiastic again—and he realized the limitless possibilities of what could be done in the cinema.

All this was an interesting part of the conversation with Mr. Howard. But what clearly indicated the man's intelligence, was his remark concerning montage. Unlike certain celebrated quacks who enjoy the name and position of "big directors" in Hollywood, Mr. Howard does not profess to know "all about" montage. On the contrary, he professes only a superficial knowledge of it, and consequently, as is often the case, we found that he understood more about it than he had claimed.

Moreover, Mr. Howard maintained that under the present system of things in Hollywood, he did not believe it was possible to "graft on" to American film-production the principles of technique which the Russian directors had evolved. The reason he believed this to be so, he explained, was because the subject-matter of the Soviet films, concerning itself basically with concepts and ideas, determines, necessitates and otherwise conditions the Soviet technique, whereas in the American product the conventional "plot-story" and so-called "entertainment" requirements form an insuperable obstacle to genuine image-construction at the very outset.

This statement from a man who has made one of the few meritorious films produced in the United States impressed us as being an honest, practical and intelligent recognition of what the American movie-system really is. The recent attempts of certain directors to "graft on" the montage-construction they have seen in the Soviet productions are futile and wasted efforts. As Mr. Howard put it, the only excuse a director can have for making fast cuts in the present films of Hollywood is to quicken the audience's attention, but that excuse in itself is a weak one and inconsistent with the montage-ideology.

Directors who imagine they can produce great pictures merely by incorporating a lot of quick cuts remind us of the "Socialists" and social reformers who imagine that they have only to institute certain reforms and "clean up" some ugly spots in the capitalist system in order to get rid of the evil itself and "evolve" a better system. It is patch-work, ineffective at best, retrogressive at the worst.

"THE HOLLYWOOD CODE"

Our friend Bryher, who co-edits *Close Up* with Kenneth MacPherson, had some interesting things to say in a recent number of the magazine. In a strong and successfully analytical attack against the "Hollywood Code" of picture-making, she wrote: "Wherever Hollywood has been accepted, there has been a definite lowering of the standards of cinema."

We are, of course, heartily in accord with this statement, and we believe—at least we sincerely hope—that it marks a clear recognition on the part of *Close Up* of the character and extent of the opposition to Eisenstein's art.

We maintain that there is no possibility of reconciling these two antipodal elements: Eisenstein and Hollywood; that the two are mutually exclusive; that the vanguard film-students throughout the world must choose definitely and uncompromisingly between them; that the term "Eisenstein" symbolizes everything in the cinema that is opposite to, and denied by, Hollywood.

Bryher herself has very charmingly expressed this deep-rooted antithesis in a section which we cannot refrain from quoting:

"Consider for instance, how Hollywood would have made *Potemkin*. The story by this time, must be familiar to all. Sailors on a Russian battleship refuse to eat meat covered with maggots. The doctor pronounces the food edible; men are to be shot for their complaint. In the ensuing mutiny their leader is killed. The townspeople, curious, indifferent and sympathetic, are shot down by Cossacks; the battleship sailing as it believes to death, sees instead the red flag appear on the masts of opposing ships.

"What would America have made of such a story?

"Maggots certainly would not have been permitted. Instead we should have opened with a sailor's bar, with plenty of females in sex-appeal promoting dresses and a cheerful song. The doctor need be little changed, but we would have had sinister designs upon the heroine who would, of course, have survived the perils of the under-

world because of her love for an old father-mother-grandparent or a young brother-sister-orphan-child at choice, helped by the patent-enamel body paint into which American stars are dipped.

"The leader of the mutineers would watch the doctor's advances, laugh, remember in a cut-back his old mother, knock the doctor out, pat the girl out of his way and sit down and drink. The doctor, not being in uniform, would leave muttering in sinister camera dissolves. Through the Odessa mists, the mutineer and the girl would discover love at first sight, to be broken apart at the first kiss clutch, by the memory of the sailor's waiting comrades. The heroine, jealous, would wander to the steps. Then, since Hollywood is wealthy in ideas as well as cameras, there are at least three directions open to the story. Simple love, the sailor is accused falsely by the doctor, is about to be shot, but is rescued as the sheet drops, by a comrade or the girl; romantic drama, the sailor is an officer disguised as a mutineer in order to discover some treacherous plot to overwhelm the ship; or a play of gangster life, the ship is loaded with alcohol, and the doctor and the mutineer are leaders of two separate bootlegging establishments. But the end of all the stories must be the same: a triumphal bridal procession down the Odessa steps, Cossacks in front with bayonets decorated with orange blossoms, sailors behind, the folk songs of the world, and on the edges, children with doves. The difference between this story and *Potemkin*, is the difference between *kitsch* and art."

Bryher concludes by suggesting that the next time the reader visits an American movie, he should form a mental picture of the way Eisenstein or Pudovkin would have treated the same subject and, conversely, the next time he sees a Soviet film he should imagine in his mind's eye how Hollywood would have made it. The movie-goer will then understand, says Bryher, "why the tinned ideas of Hollywood are so dangerous."

CHAPLIN, DE MILLE, AND ROWLAND BROWN ON CAPITALISM AND THE SOVIET UNION

There is a definite growth of liberal and semi-radical sentiment among the more intelligent members of the Hollywood film-colony. Some of them even read *The New Masses*, *The Left*, and other publications of the Revolution, but with what degree of understanding, appreciation and acceptance remains yet to be seen.

Recently, three individuals prominent in the American film-industry have expressed themselves openly and unmincingly on the question of capitalism's downfall and the Soviet Union.

In London Charlie Chaplin recently said that he did not see how the capitalist system could endure another five years.

De Mille, returning from the USSR, in an interview published in the *Los Angeles Record* and other papers, was not slow in declaring his enthusiasm and

admiration for the Soviet Union. Even before going to Russia, De Mille startled everyone by admitting bluntly that "there is something rotten at the core of our system."

Rowland Brown, director of the film *Quick Millions*, makes no secret of his sympathies with the first workers' and peasants' republic. One the eve of November 7 (anniversary of the 1917 Revolution), he sent a cablegram to the Soviet Government in which he extended his congratulations and stated that the system of society being built up by the Soviet Government is "the first real gesture at civilization."

FILM CULTURE IN THE U. S. A., 1931

Headline on the front page of the *Hollywood Daily Screen World*, Saturday, May 16:

"HIGH-HATTY" DRAMAS NUMEROUS

Repeated Warnings Against Intelligentsia Stuff Have Little Effect on Production" Brilliant Thought from *Improvement of Screen Entertainment*, by Frank Woods, a paper read at the Hollywood Convention of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, May 28:

"... the news reel remains the one item on the theatre program that retains a permanent public appeal. Why is this? The reason is perfectly apparent. It tells the truth about things of interest. There is magic in the truth. Let us not forget this phrase. There is magic in the truth."

From the *Hollywood Herald*, June 16:

"The 'housewarming' at Bernie Toplitzy's new Malibu Beach home turned into one of the largest and most artistic parties ever 'thrown' for the picture colony. A beach set, 'Paris Streets' with cafe exteriors and tables on the strand, and an Eiffel Tower illuminated in the background, cost in excess of \$2,000. Two hundred guests, including many industry executives, attended, and two orchestras provided Spanish music and jazz, respectively. Specialties were contributed by Marilyn Miller, Buddy De Sylva, Tom Patricola, Harry Rosenthal, Nina May McKinney, Gus Shy, June MacCloy, Raquel Torres and Dorothy Burgess."

From *Variety*, June 23:

"I am not a radical," Mr. DeMille said, "but now things are a question of right and wrong... There is something rotten at the core of our system."

From an editorial in the *New York Times*, entitled *A Shakespeare for the Films*, July 27:

"The movie world is worried. In spite of the gigantic growth of the industry, with its chains of theatres round the world, there is cause for anxiety. Something more than the depression is at work. One producer defined the trouble: We don't know what we want exactly, and the public doesn't know what it wants. A more thoughtful analysis is offered by Marcel Rouff in an article in the *Mercure de France*. He believes that the reason for the *malaise* in films is revealed by the cry of one expert: When shall we have a Shakespeare of the cinema?

.... it would certainly be most interesting to see some producer take his eye off the older arts, and the box office, and give free play to cinema technique, with its infinite possibilities."

(Ed. Note: No mention was made in this editorial of S. M. Eisenstein, or of the Soviet cinema.)

Excerpt from an article in the *Los Angeles Times* of Sunday, August 9, entitled "The Reason Why Greta Garbo Will Not Talk:"

"Oh," said Greta, with a little sob of pure ecstasy, "I tell you what I like. I like to smell horses and look at sunsets."

Excerpts from the speech of Louis B. Mayer, Vice-President in charge of production of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, at the Annual Dinner of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, as reported in the *Los Angeles Examiner* of November 11:

"As one of the founders of the Academy, I tonight am thrilled with pride as I look upon this gathering, the most distinguished ever assembled in the history of this institution.

"From the capital of our nation has come Vice-President Curtis. Crossing the continent for the special purpose of attending this gathering, he honors us with his presence and the good wishes of the President of the United States.

"Leaving his busy office in Sacramento in order to be with us, the chief executive of the State of California graces our gathering with his presence. Surely this assemblage would be woefully incomplete without the presence of Governor James Rolph.

"Senators, public officials and some 200 leading newspaper publishers, men whose fingers are ever on the public pulse and whose wisdom in a great measure guides the trend of public affairs, are among our distinguished guests."

"As president of the Producers' Association, I perhaps am in a specially advantageous position to know just how much the industry owes to the Academy... and I say to you tonight, that it is the greatest factor for progress the producing industry has ever known.

"The producing of pictures is a complicated affair. It involves every bewilderment, from the intricate mazes of an abstruse science to the oftentimes equally intricate problem of the human equation.

"In this maze of bewilderment, the Academy has been a guiding light, straightening out our misunderstandings, solving our technical problems, helping us improve the artistry of our pictures and creating greater understanding between industry and public.

"And so tonight we are gathered to bestow the symbols of the accomplishments in the paths of progress. The little statuettes to be awarded tonight are, in themselves, small things, but their significance is truly great. Each and every one stands for an achievement of importance and benefit not only to us here tonight, but to the world at large."

Recent announcement of the Fox film

The Yellow Ticket, as advertised in Los Angeles newspapers:

TOMORROW
AT TWO THEATRES
GLORIOUS WOMANHOOD
BRANDED BY A NATION
REVELING IN SIN!

Russia!... Land of drama...
land of licensed love... land of

tyranny... where "The Yellow Ticket" is a badge of shame, but still a pass of privilege... into this maelstrom of blackened hearts is woven a courageous romance... a love that defied the persecution of a nation

Raoul Walsh's

"YELLOW TICKET"

HOLLYWOOD SEES "THE ROAD TO LIFE"

On the 22 of January, Nikolai Ekk's famous film of the *besprizornie* (homeless children, "wild boys"), *The Road to Life*, was given its American premiere—in Hollywood. This is the first time that the premiere of a Soviet film has taken place in Hollywood instead of in New York. The reason for the change in policy is probably due to the keen interest that the American movie-industry has manifested in the question of how Russia would come through with sound films.

The intelligent minority of Hollywood's technical people have long ago freely and spontaneously admitted that, as far as silent films were concerned, the Soviet producers had Hollywood backed off the map. Wherever the silent Soviet films were shown, they made Hollywood pictures look like old-fashioned penny-arcade shows.

And now the same intelligent minority, plus a number of new spectators from the commercial and technical departments of the American movie-industry, having seen *The Road to Life*, appreciate once again how far in advance of Hollywood the Soviet cinema has traveled. In the era of the silent film, American studios were the first to turn out a few films of a high artistic and creative standard. But in the new era of the sound-film, Soviet studios are the first, and so far the only, ones to give practical demonstration of what a sound-film should be.

What are the various reactions to this picture? What is being said about it in Hollywood?

There are many groups and a great many types of people in Hollywood. Some of the most typical and most vicious specimens of the American bourgeoisie, classical examples of the leisure class in its final stage of decadence, may be found here; and, on the other hand, there are many who go hungry, who are systematically denied the right to a job, though they live in the same town where "stars," illiterate directors, bathing-beauties and other good-looking parasites receive hundreds, even thousands, of dollars per week.

So, naturally, there are many different

reactions to such a strong propaganda film as *The Road to Life*.

First, the preview audience. (Private previews of Soviet films are always held at the Filmarte, the only theatre where Russian films are shown, a few days in advance of the public presentation.)

This audience comprised, altogether, about 60 to 70 individuals. At the film's conclusion, they all applauded enthusiastically. It was clear that Ekk's work really pleased them because two other Soviet productions, *The Black Sea Mutiny* and *A Jew at War*, were received by this same group of people with disappointment and general lack of approval. All considered *The Road to Life* one of the foremost achievements of the Soviet screen; all considered it a film of rare beauty and power.

Some formalists, however, found innumerable blunders in Ekk's treatment of the theme. The montage of the sequence where the *besprizornie* break up the machine-shop was severely criticized. It was charged that in this sequence Ekk's method of building up the image-structure was entirely formless, aimless and weakly conceived. This criticism was made again in reference to the scenes where the crowd rushes across the railroad track to the body of the dead Mustapha. These shots showed the people blackly silhouetted against the sky, but in the closer shots the emotional mood was different. There were other criticisms in kind, mostly concerning montage and Ekk's failures in formal matters.

The general summary of these technical (montage) criticisms was that the film was "spotty"—wonderful in certain spots, faulty in others. Comparisons were made with Eisenstein's montage of certain parts of *Potemkin*. But everyone, even the formalists, had praise for the ending (the last 500 feet), which was called a superlative piece of artistic construction.

It was evident to everyone that on the purely mechanical side (i.e., technological equipment), Soviet sound studios are not up to the capitalist studios of Hollywood. The visual-montage throughout *The Road to Life* is excellent. Sound-montage and sound-reproduction, however, are by no means on the same quali-

tative level. The sound-reproduction of this picture is not equal to that of the most banal American movie. It is greatly inferior to that of Ozep's *Karamazov*. Whether this is due entirely to the inferior mechanical equipment of Soviet studios at the present time, or to a bad print, is hard to say. But now and then the sound-recording impaired Ekk's film to a great extent.

The audience at the first public showing of *The Road to Life* reacted to it with loud applause. Not since *Storm Over Asia* has a Soviet film been so splendidly received in Hollywood. The theme is one that is sympathetic to an average American audience. Children and young people have always been in demand on the American screen, and here is a film that does not treat children and young boys with the honey and syrup and the repulsive sentimental dishonesty of the so-called "children's picture" manufactured by Hollywood. On the contrary, the honesty and authenticity of Ekk's film of the *besprizornie* are manifest to everyone.

Yet many people here have criticized it as being "too romantic." The emotionalism of the film, they said, was not consistent with the clear-cut Marxist political ideology.

Several others held the characteristically bourgeois-American view that the film is "superficial" because it fails to deal with the "sex problem" of the *besprizornie*. These people want to know whether the *besprizornie* ever engaged in sexual intercourse after they entered the collective; whether they were allowed to play, to amuse themselves, to have games, sports, girls, etc. The episode where the *besprizornie* wreck the machinery of the collective was interpreted by these people as signifying that the *besprizornie* were sorely in need of emotional and sexual release after a long winter of relentless work!

Others found the picture "naive," pointing to the fact that in the beginning the *besprizornie* have fierce, wild, animated faces, while toward the end they look "sweet" and dress like American bourgeois boys.

Many people declared that the picture is too long. Others said the opposite, maintaining that it is so rich in substance and artistry that its length is one of its chief virtues.

There were some individuals, and perhaps there will be a few others before the picture finishes its run at the Filmarte, who found *The Road to Life* very "artificial."

The most popular scenes were Mustapha's appearance for the first time, before the Soviet Commission for Homeless Children and the "funeral train-ride" at the end. All audiences have heartily enjoyed the former, and it is no exaggeration to say that this scene alone has created a warmer feeling for the Soviet Union than anything else in the Soviet films shown here in the past season.

A curious reaction to *The Road to Life* was that of a bourgeois intellectual in Hollywood who, because of the "glorifi-

cation" of the locomotive, accused Ekk of a sort of "technological fetishism." (Cf. Anisimov's criticism of Eisenstein in *Literature of the World Revolution* No. 3.)

But on the other hand, many hungry people, many people who have long been without jobs—Hollywood's unorganized, unformed "bread-line"—have managed to see *The Road to Life*. They have not

asked questions, they have not analyzed it, discussed montage or argued about "technological fetishism." They simply have seen the film and have been tremendously impressed.

The success of *The Road to Life* in Hollywood marks the beginning of a very promising epoch of Soviet sound-films in the United States.
Hollywood, Calif.

With this banal story of the new life of Russia, the author of *The End of Saint Petersburg* has made an admirable film. The sound, recorded by professor Obolenski, is used by Pudovkin to such advantage that it is obvious that after a few laboratory experiments he has learned to exploit it to the utmost.

The superlative quality of the photography, a perfect rhythm never interrupted in its continuity and harmony, a complete comprehension of the individual and collective souls of the Russian people, and especially the "Pudovkin manner," personal and vibrant, his exact appreciation of the value and duration of every image, these all contribute toward making *Life is Beautiful*, along with *Mother*, the most human and the most pathetic of Pudovkin's films.

NOTES FROM MOSCOW

By G. L. GEORGE

Translated from the French by
H. J. Salemsen

"*Life is Beautiful*," a Pudovkin Talkie

It is almost superfluous to recall the calumny which the bourgeois press of the entire world was only too happy to spread after the preview of this picture in Moscow. The report was that, the film having been suppressed by Soviet censorship, Pudovkin, because of a so-called "petit-bourgeois idealism" which supposedly pervaded the film, had been deprived of his workers' card and banned from the Communist Party. He was even about to be jailed, they said, and only the personal protection of Stalin was powerful enough to save him from the clutches of the G. P. U. Following these incidents, Pudovkin, disgusted with working in the USSR, was supposed to have fled to Berlin in the hope of getting a contract that would bring him to America.

It is only too easy to see that this is the classical anti-Soviet falsehood, but reinforced by those powers interested in discrediting the Russian cinema, the universally recognized quality of which threatens to compete too mercilessly with the international movie product.

Pudovkin immediately answered by a letter denying these stupid rumors, but, altho the general news press is supposed to be independent, it did not deem it useful to run this denial.

Here are a few extracts from Pudovkin's rectification: "This whole business is utterly false and absurd. You know how such things take place in Russia. The state has given the cinema an educational role, in the broadest sense of the term. It is not possible for any person to film anything he pleases. Each script, before entering production, is submitted to various departments which pass upon its cultural, artistic, and ideological values. If any details are found amiss, the writer is called in, and, together with the head of the department in question, he corrects his work.

"As for my own picture, it was not suppressed by censorship. Quite to the contrary, it was approved for public showing. And, as in the case of almost all important Russian pictures, it was openly discussed in the different circles competent to judge it. This criticism, because

of the extremely varied public opinion in USSR, brought up several suggested changes in certain parts of my film, which is a great point in favor of the general feeling of artistic and social responsibility on the part of the spectators as well as the technicians.

"My so-called flight from Moscow has an equally simple explanation. I am employed by the Mejrabpom, Russian name of the Workers' International Relief, (W. I. R.), which has its headquarters in Berlin. My position requires frequent commuting between that city and Moscow. In that manner, I played in *The Living Corpse*, which my old friend Ozeep was making in Berlin.

"Conferences have been under way for several months to arrange for my going to Hollywood and directing a picture, employing the technical sound and dialogue equipment used in the California studios, an equipment which far surpasses that available even in the best studios of Europe."

Since this closes all misunderstanding concerning these incidents, let us glance at Pudovkin's picture. The scenario, which he wrote himself, is briefly this:

During the civil war, commandant Langovoi, a worker returned from the front, carries on the fight together with his wife Mascha and his childhood pal Boris, in the revolutionary ranks. Wounded in a scuffle, he enters a hospital, after sending his wife off to rest in the country at the home of a friend. After the revolution, life follows its habitual course. Langovoi, well once again, becomes attracted to another woman, a woman of society. Her beauty and refinement takes him away from his friends. Boris tries vainly to bring him back to his work. The comrades disapprove of him. Having by chance gone to a club-meeting, he is heckled, and it takes all of Boris' tact to get him away safely. This incident completely convinces him that he no longer has anything in common with his onetime companions. But he thereupon receives a letter from Mascha, completely back to health, announcing her return. Before he even has time to consider what he will do, she arrives. On seeing her again, her natural charm, her unpainted beauty, he realizes that she is really the one he loves and he can forget the other woman and the life away from his class, for now, there is no doubt, "life is beautiful."

THE NEW SOVIET FILM PROGRAM

A Report from the "Moskauer Rundschau"

To celebrate the October holidays, Soyuskindo released a number of new films, the most notable of which was the sound film *Mountains of Gold*, directed by Jutkevitch. The musical score was written by the famous Soviet composer, Shostakovitch. The picture deals with the strike of the Putilov-works in conjunction with the striking naphtha workers of Baku in 1914. The hero is a peasant who, through a gradual and difficult process, becomes a class-conscious worker.

The direction is good only in parts and on the whole it has nothing new to offer, for the director retains almost literally ideas and images from the films of his former good teachers. However, the sound treatment and musical score are of interest—in fact, at times the director becomes so enamored of the spoken word that he causes the film to drag, and unpardonable lengths of dialogue escape him entirely.

The themes of the other new films of Soyuskindo all deal with the contemporary life of the Soviet Union—how to overcome a shortage of production in a factory, reconstruction of transport, the building of important industries, advancing education in schools to the status of a polytechnicum, mechanisation of the Don Basin, industrial and cultural progress of the miners, etc., etc.

Mezhrabpom announces the following program of production for this winter: Five films are to be released, which are likewise to arouse the interest of foreign countries. The most prominent one is Pudovkin's film *The Steamer Piatiletka*. The hero is a worker from Hamburg who is engaged in the shipbuilding industry. He is working on the construction of a steamer which is to be delivered to the Soviet Union. He is transported on this steamer to Russia, and soon takes an active part in the great Five-Year-Plan. Further details pertaining to this new Pudovkin film are unfortunately not available at present. Pudovkin, however, just returned from a location trip in Hamburg and Odessa and will soon make his

own report on the progress of his work.

Two other feature films will be released in the near future, *The House of The Dead* and *The Horizon*.

The House of the Dead is being directed by Fedorov, a co-worker of Meyerhold whose work, *Roar, China!* is well known abroad. The continuity of this Dostoevski novel is by Victor Shklovsky, one of the most popular film-writers of Soviet Russia. (The films, *Bulat Batir* and *The Gentlemen Skotininy*, and others are also by him). In the film *The House of the Dead*, Dostoevski himself is the leading character. The central idea is Dostoevski's conception that Russia is the prison of all peoples. Dostoevski recognizes this truth—but forced labor breaks his will. He then sings hymns of praise to the aristocracy, writes reactionary novels and his final effort, to

resurrect the revolutionary dreams of his youth, comes too late. *The Brothers Karamazov*, whose heroes he wanted to make into revolutionaries, remains unfinished.

The Horizon, the other feature sound film, is under the direction of Kuleshov, the former teacher of Pudovkin. The scenario of this film has also been written by Victor Shklovsky. It deals with a young Jew in a small town on the southern coast of Russia. He struggles along and dreams of America. His friends try to draw him into the revolutionary movement, but he longs for bourgeois democracy. He emigrates to the United States and is later drafted into the U. S. Army, where he gets a thorough drilling. He begins to realize that there is no difference between the Czar's Army and the American Army, except that the latter has better military equipment. In

the end he goes with the American Expeditionary Forces to Siberia. Here he deserts and joins the Revolution, to help the Bolsheviks in the construction of the Soviet Union.

Another film of the young director, *Comrade Li-Fu*, treats of the Communist Revolution in Southern China. The film was made on the southern borders of the Soviet Union in Central Asia. The cast consist mainly of Chinese.

Finally, the film *The War Is Not Yet Over*, directed by Yrinov, should also be mentioned. The montage and sound-treatment reflect strongly the influence of the works of Vertov. (Vertov himself will now also work under the banner of Mezhrabpom-Film.)

(Translated by Christel Gang) In

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EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA



SENSTEIN - AND - ALEXANDROFF'S
complete synopsis for

"QUE VIVA MEXICO"

It will undoubtedly prove of interest to the readers of *Experimental Cinema* to learn what the group of people publishing this magazine has been doing in the realm of cinema since the appearance of the fourth issue. Although publications has been suspended for virtually one year, this year has been in many respects the most active in the history of the magazine.

On the West Coast several of the editors of *Experimental Cinema* were privately backed to produce a film dealing with the exploitation of labor, and in particular with the tragedy of Mexican workers, in agricultural sections of Southern California, notably in Imperial Valley and adjacent territory. The preparation for this production consumed a great deal of time, but the production itself was foredoomed to the fate of many an independent film: viz., to a fatal conflict between producers and production-manager. In this instance the conflict arose over the insistent demand of the *Experimental Cinema* staff that the film be an artistic achievement as well as a piece of agitative propaganda. The production-manager, however, adhered to the same policy that was adopted by the production-manager of Eisenstein's Mexican film, to whom Eisenstein has referred as "the evil genius of *Que Viva Mexico!*", and relentlessly opposed making the film a creative effort, in which the formal qualities of cinema would share honors with the agitative drive of the film. The film, unfortunately, has been scrapped.

The *Experimental Cinema* production staff, however, is completing plans for the re-financing of this film and intends to remake it in the near future.

In the Midwest, B. G. Braver-Mann (now in New York) has been revising the mss. for his book on the motion picture as an art and social force. This work is designed to offer a comprehensive survey of film theory and film practice based upon analyses of the montage in the best films and on contact with outstanding film directors, technicians, experimenters and theoreticians in Europe and America. Recently Braver-Mann made *Sewer-Diggers*, a short, with Joseph Houdyma, cameraman for Dovzhenko's *Diplomatic Luggage*, Dolyna's *Storm* and other films.

In the East, Lewis Jacobs, co-editor of *Experimental Cinema*, developed during the past year and a half a new technique of trailer-making, devising original methods of montage for dynamic trailer-composition. Jacobs also produced a short subject, *As I Walk*, which projected in vivid detail the poverty and social misery in New York City.

But the major occupation of the editorial staff of *Experimental Cinema* since the appearance of the fourth issue was the campaign for Eisenstein's Mexican film. This was the first organized campaign ever waged in defense of a great work of film art, and it was launched by the editors of *Experimental Cinema* as soon as it became unmistakably evident that Upton Sinclair and his wife were ruthlessly determined to proceed with their plans of destroying *Que Viva Mexico!* The editors of *Experimental Cinema* decided that, although the Sinclairs might be legally empowered to dispose of the film as they saw fit, they should not be permitted to commit this act of treachery and vandalism and at the same time escape public censure.

The campaign formally began when the editors of *Experimental Cinema* communicated the details of Sinclair's moves to Eisenstein's assistant and representative in Mexico City, Augustin Aragon Leiva, with the request that Señor Leiva start a public protest in the Mexican press. This protest occupied the front pages of Mexico City newspapers for weeks afterwards and its reverberations can still be heard throughout Latin America and Europe. In the United States the editors of *Experimental Cinema* built up a nation-wide press campaign against the mangled version of *Que Viva Mexico!*

The enormous amount of detail involved in this mighty effort to save the film epic of Mexico, sidetracked the routine business of publishing the magazine for a period of six months. Those readers of *Experimental Cinema* who know the details of the Eisenstein campaign are able to appreciate the campaign as a signal attempt to put into practice the editorial policies and theories by which the editors of *Experimental Cinema* have sought to ensure the intellectual and creative integrity of their magazine.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

V. G. ALEXANDROFF has been co-director and script collaborator on all of Eisenstein's films.

KIRK BOND is a Baltimore film critic who has written for *Creative Art*, *Bookman*, *Adelphi*, *Europa*, and *Hound & Horn*.

RENE CLAIR, director of *Sous les Toits de Paris*, *Le Million*, *A Nous la Liberté*, and *July 14*, is equal to Lubitsch in his knowledge of the cinema. For several years Hollywood has been trying to "buy" him for America. Clair is now the "rage" of the bourgeois cinema in England and France.

A. DOVZHENKO, it is safe to say, is the most original director in films today.

SERGEI M. EISENSTEIN: needs no introduction to readers of *Experimental Cinema*. He achieved world recognition with *Cruiser Potemkin* in 1926. Since then he has become a pacemaker to film directors throughout the world. At present, Eisenstein is in Moscow engaged on a film dealing with the history of Russia.

CLAY HARRIS, a technician in Hollywood, is a critic and theoretician well known there for his advanced views.

IRVING LERNER, still and motion picture photographer and instructor at the Harry Alan Potamkin School of the Film, has written many reviews for the press here and abroad.

H. P. J. MARSHALL, after some experience as an amateur producer of documentary films and a period of work with John Grierson in Scotland, was given a scholarship at the Soviet State Institute of Cinema, Moscow; now in his second year has been in production as assistant director to Ivens on the sound film *Komsomol* for Meshrabpom Studios.

JOSEPH SCHILLINGER is one of the most advanced musical composers in America. His compositions have been played throughout the world. His excerpt in this issue is from a book to be published this winter. He has made many experiments in color, sound and movement. He brings new rhythmic resources to the film.

V. SMIRNOV until recently was head of Amkino, the distributing agency for Soviet films in America. At present he is in Moscow working in the studios.

N. SOLEW; A critic and film worker in Moscow. He is the U. S. S. R. editor for *Experimental Cinema*.

CONRAD SEILER is a well-known playwright living in Hollywood. He has published several books of one-act plays, the most popular being *Suicide and Other One-Act Plays*. He has written continuity for major film studios and has contributed articles to *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The New Masses*, *Partisan* and other publications.

DZIGA VERTOFF, founder of the *Cine-Eye* group in the Soviet cinema, has been a potent factor in film practice. His theories have influenced Soviet directors "to break away from the arena of the theatre and enter the arena of life."—Vertoff's films have been of the greatest practical importance in the film's struggle to emancipate itself from the tricks and conventions of the other art media.

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All letters of inquiry, all checks, subscriptions and money orders, etc. should be addressed to the editorial and business offices of **Experimental Cinema**, 51 West 47th street, New York City. Francis Steloff, Business Manager.

All manuscripts should be mailed to the New York office of **Experimental Cinema** and should be accompanied by return postage. **Experimental Cinema** welcomes manuscripts but cannot be held responsible for the loss or damage of unsolicited material.

Subscription to **Experimental Cinema** (four numbers) in U. S. A.: \$2.00; Foreign \$2.50. Back copies are sold at premium prices. There are a few left of each issue at the following prices: No. 1, \$2.00 a copy; No. 2, \$1.50 a copy; No. 3, \$1.00 a copy; No. 4, 75c a copy.

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This still and the shots illustrating the synopsis of the scenario for "**Que Viva Mexico!**" were taken by Edouard Tisse.

"The people bear resemblance to the stone images, for those images represent the faces of their ancestors . . . the same expressions of face as those portrayed on the ancient stone carvings." — P. 5, **Synopsis for "Que Viva Mexico!"**

Introduction to Synopsis for "Que Viva Mexico!"

In presenting the scenario for "*Que Viva Mexico!*", the editors of *Experimental Cinema* feel called upon to reveal certain facts with which its readers, including the particular students and followers of Eisenstein, are probably unacquainted. Descriptions and detailed accounts of the scenario, together with extensive quotations from it, have already appeared in several other periodicals, but the scenario itself, in toto and exactly as Eisenstein and his collaborator, G. V. Alexandroff, wrote it, is here printed for the first time.

It is, accordingly, the scenario on the basis of which Mr. and Mrs. Upton Sinclair have attempted to justify their mutilation of Eisenstein's original film. The distorted version of "*Que Viva Mexico!*" was finally exhibited, at an unsuccessful public engagement in New York City, under the title *Thunder Over Mexico*.

The editors of *Experimental Cinema* have frequently been asked: How does it happen that the people responsible for the fraudulent version of "*Que Viva Mexico!*" are in a position to maintain that their market-product, *Thunder Over Mexico*, was indeed based upon Eisenstein's own words and specifications?

Before Eisenstein could shoot a single foot of film on Mexican soil, he had to satisfy the government censor that nothing in the picture would reveal, or in any way suggest, the poverty, slavery and general degradation of the Mexican masses. Film censorship in Mexico is at least as rigid as that of any other country, and more severe than that of most countries. It is virtually impossible for anyone to take even a camera snapshot in Mexico without incurring the interference of the police or some form of bureaucratic displeasure.

Under these conditions it may readily be seen that whatever ideas Eisenstein had in mind for the production of a film, parts of which would be critical of the present regime and of the exploitation of the peons and workers of present-day Mexico, would necessarily have to be concealed, and not so much as a hint of such ideas might be permitted in the scenario.

That the present "official" scenario is pleasantly innocuous; that oppression of the peon and the Indian is ascribed to the Diaz regime, more than twenty-five years ago; and that the finale of the story (the much-disputed epilogue), as contained herein, is a non-committal catalogue of shots about "factories", "athletes", "automobiles", "progress", etc., with not the remotest hint of ownership by Mexican capitalists or control by Wall Street, and with no definite conclusion or climax, — these are facts which will be abundantly evident to the reader. But certain other facts are also true and cannot be ignored by anyone who wishes to evaluate this scenario in its proper light:

First, Eisenstein, as has already been stated, was under pressure to win the confidence and cooperation of the Mexican government, — indeed, to win even the mere right of photographing anything whatever.

Secondly, closely connected with this unfortunate circumstance is the fact that Eisenstein committed a fatal mistake in trusting his sponsor, Mr. Upton Sinclair as a "comrade-in-arms" and as a friend of the proletariat. The "myth of Upton Sinclair", which lingers like a fog in European countries and especially in the Soviet Union, clouded the judgment of the Russian director and blinded him to the trap into which he had stepped when he signed the contract. The contract, giving ownership, control, final power, and supreme decision to the employer, without according to the employed even so much as the right to edit and mount the material after he had shot it, was so cunningly worded that those who have seen it find it difficult to blame Eisenstein despite his apparent gullibility. Historically speaking, it was not the first time an important artist has been duped and tricked by his patrons. Thus, while Eisenstein agreed in writing to produce a so-called "non-political" film, he also innocently imagined that Sinclair's fundamental loyalty would be to the inevitable Marxian content and interpretation of the finished film.

Trusting the author of *The Jungle* implicitly, as a self-styled friend of the Soviet Union and as a self-styled supporter of the working-class movement, Eisenstein entered cheerfully, and fatally, into these written entanglements, — and thereby helped to destroy his own creation. Long before the camera of Edouard Tisse had shot the last foot of film in the land of the Aztecs, the author of *The Jungle* was planning the Sinclair Foundation, and a purpose was conceived for Eisenstein's Mexican epic of which its creator was not informed until later, after the film had been virtually stolen from him.

The third and most important point in connection with this scenario, which follows from the first two is that Eisenstein shot a vast amount of material, entirely apart from the four romanticized episodes, which the scenario does not even suggest. This additional imagery, amounting to dozens of reels of film, includes the material on the festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the ceremonies of the Day of Death, scenes of the tyranny and power wielded by the Church in Mexico, scenes satirizing bureaucrats, politicians, and leading figures of the Mexican government, scenes of fantasy, extravaganza and Mexican art, and many shots which can only be described as representing the "connective tissue" of the picture for use in completing the montage of the whole.

In cutting *Thunder Over Mexico*, the Sinclair-Lesser agents selected one of the four major episodes,

— the *Maguey* story, and attempted to sell it to the public as representing the entire epic of Mexico shot by Eisenstein and as having been cut “in accord with Eisenstein’s ideas”. Accordingly, to the extent that he abided literally by the *plot* of the *Maguey* story (the only episode, by the way, which contains anything resembling a plot, the rest being of a purer cinematic and documentary character), Sinclair was able to say, with the same kind and degree of “technical truthfulness” that one would expect of an unscrupulous lawyer, that he had “followed” the scenario. That, in “following” the scenario, he had removed from its position in the symphonic pattern an entire episode; that he had stripped the isolated episode of its poetic and musical overtones, its revolutionary implications, and its profound reflections on the life of central Mexico; and that the result of Lesser’s cutting was neither in harmony with the spirit in which the scenario is written nor in accord with any of Eisenstein’s intensely personal manifestations of style, nor with his basic principles of cinema technique, — these were trivialities that did not deter Sinclair from publicly glorifying his crime.

A word as to the style and method of the scenario. Perhaps the first thing that strikes the reader is the complete absence of technical directions or specifications of any kind. The language is that of poetic prose, and it is never intruded upon by practical suggestions of camera, focus or montage. The method is that of projecting an image on the printed page without defining its final cinematic form. The scenario thus becomes, in a sense, a kind of storehouse of images from which the director selects what he wants and fashions it according to his creative decision at the moment. How plain it is, therefore, that none but Eisenstein could edit the material! How obvious that neither Sinclair nor his hired hack, Lesser, could have edited the film “in accord with Eisenstein’s ideas” since there were no technical directions to guide him!

Yet the identity between the verbal imagery of the written page and the filmic realization is practically complete. For example, in the *Maguey* episode, the line: “*Feudal estates, former monasteries of the Spanish conquerors, stand like unapproachable fortresses amidst the vast seas of cactus groves*”, has its exact counterpart in several of the shots taken in the neighborhood of the fortress around which the action is built, the Hacienda Tetlapayac, and the overtone of “unapproachable fortress” in a “vast sea” is most eloquently projected in the tonality of Tisse’s photography, in the perspectives of the individual images, and in the montage of the whole cumulative composition to produce the effect of arid grandeur.

Similarly, in the same episode, the following image, caught by Eisenstein from several acute angles, casts its tragic overtonal spell: “*The hissing bullets pierce the succulent leaves of the maguey plant and the juice, like tears, trickles down its trunk.*” Even the generalized assertion: “*Aggressiveness, virility, arrogance and austerity characterize this novel*”, was photographed, and was to have been mounted in the original film (which, of course,

it was not in the Sinclair-Lesser distortion) in a dynamic group of static elements: *Maguey + Cloud + Vast Perspective (the Chihuahua plain) + Fortress + Endless and Desolate Desert.*

In the *Prologue* also, the sum-image, “the land of Yucatan”, materializing on the screen (original film) out of a dynamic and rhythmic progression of such image-elements as “heathen temples”, “holy cities”, “majestic pyramids”, “masks of the gods”, “phantoms of the past”, “ruins”, etc., culminates concretely, like grey tones thickening with increasing density into black, in a synthetic visualization of the “realms of death, where the past still prevails over the present”.

The scenario, however, fails to establish what was actually intended as the major theme of the Mexican epic: i.e., the assertive eternality of the dominant Indian race-types from ancient Yucatan to modern Mexico. The fulfillment, the final triumph, of these race-types was to be depicted by Eisenstein in a prophetic anticipation — in imagery both majestic and fantastic — of the revolutionary urge dormant in the exploited descendants of those ancient races. The material for the conclusion (the epilogue) was photographed. But obviously, since the land had been taken from the Indians by the Spaniards and withheld from them by the subsequent governments of Mexico, Eisenstein was again embarrassed to mention this theme of European imperialism in a scenario which had to be officially sanctioned. Consequently, neither the epilogue nor the scenario as a whole in any way reveals the main objective of the picture, which is—the dialectic interpretation of Mexico. Indeed, the scenario as it stands here, being mostly descriptive and narrative, shows no such grand conceptual design.

The epilogue in itself is rather insipid “propitiatory palaver” which Eisenstein had no intention of using in the final film, but which Sinclair emphasized in his mutilated version. Sinclair was thus able to say that he was “faithful” to the epilogue, as indeed he was, — but to an epilogue which was never intended for the picture!

In conclusion, it is only necessary to quote Eisenstein himself on this “official” scenario. When consulted two years ago about its publication, he warned, quite good-humoredly, that, because of the Mexican censorship and due to his growing suspicions of Sinclair, he had been forced to write the scenario “in the apple-sauciest way”. He doubted that admirers of his previous works would be impressed, except unfavorably, by the document. We are offering the scenario for “*Que Viva Mexico!*”, despite its author’s own critical strictures, because, whatever its enforced failings as a dialectic interpretation of that country, it does project, although imperfectly, a substantial portion of the basic framework of Eisenstein’s finished film. Moreover, as the reader will discover, there is very little “apple sauce” and a great deal of poetry in this unusual example of cinema-writing. It is hoped that this self-derogated work of the author will furnish a clue to the real magnitude of the rich and glorious vision of Eisenstein and Alexandroff.

"QUE VIVA MEXICO"

The story of this film is unusual.

Four novels framed by prologue and epilogue, unified in conception and spirit, creating its entity.

Different in content.

Different in location.

Different in landscape, people, customs.

Opposite in rhythm and form, they create a vast and multicolored Film-Symphony about Mexico.

Six Mexican folk-songs accompany these novels, which themselves are but songs, legends, tales from different parts of Mexico brought together in one united cinema show.

PROLOGUE

Time in the prologue is eternity.

It might be today.

It might as well be twenty years ago.

Might be a thousand.

For the dwellers of Yucatan, land of ruins and huge pyramids, have still conserved, in feature and forms, the character of their ancestors, the great race of the ancient Mayas.

Stones—

Gods—

Men—

Act in the prologue.

In time remote . . .

In the land of Yucatan, among heathen temples, holy cities and majestic pyramids. In the realms of death, where the past still prevails over the present, there the starting-point of our film is laid.

As a symbol of recalling the past, as a farewell rite to the ancient Maya civilization, a weird funeral ceremony is held.

In this ceremony idols of the heathen temples, masks of the gods, phantoms of the past, take part.

In the corresponding grouping of the stone images, the masks, the bas-reliefs and the living people, the immobile act of the funeral is displayed.

The people bear resemblance to the stone images, for those images represent the faces of their ancestors.

The people seem turned to stone over the grave of the deceased in the same poses, the same expressions of face, as those portrayed on the ancient stone carvings.

A variety of groups that seem turned to stone, and of monuments of antiquity—the component parts of the symbolic funerals—appear in a shifting procession on the screen.

And only the quaint rhythm of the drums of the Yucatan music, and the high-pitched maya song, accompany this immobile procession.

Thus ends the prologue—overture to the cinematographic symphony, the meaning of which shall be revealed in the contents of the four following stories and of the Finale at the end of these.

FIRST NOVEL: SANDUNGA

Tropical Tehuantepec.

The Isthmus between Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Near the borders of Guatemala.

Time is unknown in Tehuantepec.

Time runs slowly under the dreamy weaving of palms and costumes, and customs do not change for years and years.

PERSONS:

1. Concepción, an Indian girl.

2. Abundio, her novio (future husband).

3. His Mother.

4. Tehuanas (Tehuantepec girls).

5. Population of Tehuantepec in festivals, ceremonies and a popular wedding.

Sandunga

The rising sun sends its irresistible call to life.

Its all-pervading rays penetrate into the darkest of the tropical forest, and, with the sun and the sound of the gentle morning breeze of the ocean, the denizens of the Mexican tropical land awaken.

Flocks of screaming parrots flutter noisily among the palm branches waking up the monkeys, who close their ears in anger and run down to the river.

On their course these startle the solemn pelicans off the shore sands, and then they plunge, grumbling loudly, into the waves to fish floating bananas and cocoanuts.

From the deep of the river crabs, turtles, and sluggish alligators crawl up to the shore to bask their century-old bodies in the sun.

Indian maids are bathing in the river; they lie on the sandy, shallow bottom of the river and sing a song.

Slow as an old-time waltz, sensual as a Danzon, and happy as their own dreams—an Oaxaca song—the "Sandunga."

Another group of girls in tanned little boats glide slowly by in the bright surface of the river, indulging in the luxury of idleness and the warm kisses of the sunbeams.

A cascade of jet black shining hair drying in the sun denotes a third group of girls seated by the trunks of the nearby palm-trees.

Proud and majestic, like a fairy queen in her natural maiden beauty, is among them a girl by the name of Concepción.

Under the caress of the waves of her hair she lets herself float into dream-land. A wreath of flowers crowns her brow. While listening to the song of her chums she closes her eyes, and in her imagination gold takes the place of flowers.

A necklace of golden coins, adorned with rough pearls strung on threads of golden chains, is glimmering on her breast.

A golden necklace—this is the object of all her

dreams; this is the dream of all the Tehuanas—the Tehuantepec girls.

From tender childhood a girl begins to work, saving painstakingly every nickel, every penny, in order that at the age of sixteen or eighteen she may have the golden necklace.

The necklace—that is a fortune, it is an estate. The necklace is the future dowry.

And the bigger, the more expensive it is, the happier future, marital life.

That is why the dreams of Concepción are so passionate; that is why the visions floating before her mind's eye are so colorful.

Handsome youths alternate with the necklace dreams.

Youthful beauty blossoms on the screen. . . .

The dreamy song of the girls wafts over the dreamy voluptuous tropics. . . .

Oh, . . . we have let ourselves drift so deeply into dreams, that we have not even noticed how the girls got to work, when they went over to the market place, exhibited their wares: oranges, bananas, pineapples, flowers, pots, fish, and other merchandise for sale. The Tehuantepec market-place is an interesting sight. If you will look in this corner you may think yourself in India.

On turning to the other side you will find it like Bagdad because of the big earthenware pots surrounding its youthful vendor.

In still another place it looks like the South Seas. However, there are also spots that look like nothing else on earth, for four-eyed fishes are sold only in Tehuantepec.

As soon as a girl sells some trifle, as soon as she receives the few cents in payment, she immediately begins to think of the necklace, begins to count the gold coins she still has to earn.

Thus, coin by coin, the necklace is built, enhanced, but, alas, it is still short one—the bigger, central coin.

So figured Concepción, she needed only one, just one more coin to win the right to happiness!

Business, however, is slow in the quiet, lazy tropical market.

Concepción goes on dreaming about this last coin, while the song, the song that stands for happiness with Tehuantepec girls, continues to float in the air.

But at last the bananas are sold, those bananas that were to bring in the money for completion of the necklace. And as the customer pays Concepción, she says: "May your necklace bring you luck!"

The happy Concepción tightly grips the long wished-for coin in her hand.

THE BALL

The most beautiful that the tropical forest can yield, flowers, banana-trees, palm-leaves, fruits, adorn the walls of the dance hall.

The most elegantly dressed of the Tehuana girls are seen there. The dance hall is the only place where a youth and a girl may meet, where they can confide to each other the secret of the heart!

In the brilliance of her best dress and the high pitch of her feelings she casts aside the silk veil of her shawl to draw the eyes of all youths and

maidens and keep them spellbound upon the splendor of her beauty and her new golden necklace.

After the dance, when Concepción withdraws with her beloved to a retired corner, Abundio proposes to her. And now:

THE PROPOSAL

Behold Concepción trembling, pensive, frightened. And here the author speaks!

—Why Concepción, isn't this what you came for? Is it not what you expected? Is it not what you longed for? In reply to the voice of the author Concepción smiles, nods her head in assent. But!

The Bridegroom's Mother is a practical woman!

She sends her women to the bride's house to take stock of the dowry and make sure that all is right.

That there are enough petticoats in the trousseau. That the gold coins in the necklace are plentiful.

Experienced old women, nearly centenarians who had taken hands in the marriages of three generations come to Concepción's home. They examine all her outfit, feel the velvet, smell the silk, count the gold coins in the necklace and subject them to the tooth-test to make sure of the purity of the gold.

Stirred to the depths of her soul Concepción laughs with joy and happiness. The venerable women then pronounce judgment:

All is perfectly right! So, traditional rites begin.

Concepción's friends bring her presents: A cow dressed up in a masquerade costume; goats with bow ties around their necks; they are carrying on their shoulders many hens, turkeys, little pigs and other gifts and in a quaint procession are advancing toward the bride's home.

In compliance with a tradition centuries old they bring her pure bee's-wax candles fantastically decorated.

Middle-aged women are busy in the elaborated preparation of typical and delicious dishes for the indispensable, peculiar banquet.

Entire Tehuantepec is stirred up by this event.

All the girls are wearing the fairy regional costumes and wait for the newly-wedded near the church.

Under the sound of the wedding bells the procession carrying palm branches goes to the house of the young couple.

And when left by themselves, Concepción coyly allows her husband to take off her pride—the golden necklace.

Grandma runs out on the balcony and loudly announces to the expectant Tehuantepecans that Concepción—the girl, has become Concepción the woman.

Sky rockets soar up high; fire-works crack, all the young girl friends of Concepción turn their fairy head-gear inside out, like a flock of bih-birds all spreading out their wings, and they dance and sing!

THE SANDUNGA

The Sandunga that always sings in the air whenever happiness comes—either in dreams or in reality.

While throughout the tropical forest under the peaceful fragrance of the palm-trees life pursues its habitual daily course.

The old apes rock their offspring to sleep.
Parrots teach their young to scream.
Pelicans bring fish for their little ones in their pouches.

Time passes, new flowers bloom. Concepción the woman is now a happy mother.

Thus the story of Concepción comes to an end, with the portraying of happy, contented parents and a laughing boy.

With the sun setting beyond the Ocean.

With the peaceful lyric-song of dreaming beautiful girls.

Ends the romance of tropical Tehuantepec.

SECOND NOVEL: MAGUEY

The action of this story develops through the endless fields of maguey in the "Llanos de Apam" and the ancient Hacienda de Tetlapayac, State of Hidalgo. "Llanos de Apam" are the foremost "pulque"-producing section of Mexico.

Time of the action, beginning of this Century under the social conditions of Porfirio Diaz' dictatorship.

PERSONS:

1. Sebastian, peon indio
2. Maria, his bride
3. Joaquin, her father
4. Ana, her mother
5. The Hacendado
6. Sara, his daughter
7. Don Julio, her cousin
8. Don Nicolas, the administrator
9. Melesio, his mozo
10. Señor Balderas, a guest
11. Felix
12. Luciano—peons, friends of Sebastian
13. Valerio
14. Charros, mozos, guests and peons

The Maguey

Aggressiveness, virility, arrogance and austerity characterize this novel.

As the North Pole differs from the Equator, so unlike to dreamy Tehuantepec are the famous "Llanos de Apam."

So different their people, customs, ways and mode of living.

At the foot of the high volcanoes, at an altitude of ten thousand feet, on this desert land grows the big cactus plant—the Maguey.

With their mouths they suck the juice of this cactus plant to make the Indian drink known as "Pulque."

White, like milk—a gift of the gods, according to legend and belief, this strongest intoxicator drowns sorrows, inflames passions and makes pistols fly out of their holsters.

Feudal estates, former monasteries of the Spanish conquerors, stand like unapproachable fortresses amidst the vast seas of cactus groves.

Long before dawn, long before the snowy peaks of the volcanoes are lit up by the first rays of the sun, over the high walls of the massive farm-house come the sad, slow tunes of a song.

"El Alabado" the peons call this song.

They sing it every morning before they get to work.

It is a hymn in which they pray to the Holy Virgin to help them on the newly dawning day. When the high snowy peaks of the mountains begin to glitter under the rising sun the gates of the fortress-like farm-house are opened and, ending their song, the peons tightly wrapped in their serapes and holding their big sombreros in their hands, pour out into the cactus fields to suck in the juice of the maguey with long, especially fitted calabashes.

On the screen you shall see the astonishingly original process of pulque production—which originated hundreds of years ago and has not changed up to the epoch of this story.

Later, when the fog has cleared away, when the sun has warmed the earth, the servants of the landlord's household get up and begin preparations for the evening, for on this day the annual feast of the Hacienda is to be celebrated.

The "charros" put on their best costumes in honor of the guests and they exhibit boastfully their remarkable horses.

Meantime, in the maguey field, where the peon Sebastian is working, a meeting takes place. Maria's parents bring their daughter to hand her over to her fiancée.

According to tradition, Sebastian will have to take his bride to the owner of the Hacienda as homage.

But the "charros" who are guarding the landlord's house won't let Sebastian in, so he has to remain in the front yard.

On the terrace the landlord, in the company of a group of his nearest friends, are having drinks—and their spirits are rising.

The "hacendado" receives Maria; he is a good-natured old man; he fumbles in his vest pocket for a few pesos as a gift to the bride.

But at this moment an old-fashioned carriage drawn by six mules comes speeding along.

The old man's daughter, Sara, has arrived.

She has brought her cousin with her and has broken in upon the group on the veranda in a storm of laughter and gaiety.

She flies into her father's arms. And all their friends drink a toast to her health.

Maria is forgotten.

Sebastian gets restless, while waiting in the front yard.

His sweetheart is slow in coming back to him and the explosive laughter on the veranda sounds suspicious.

The forgotten, frightened, inexperienced Maria is awaiting her luck.

Bad luck appears in the shape of a coarse, drunken guest with a big mustache.

Availing himself of the fact that the company is too absorbed with drinking and merry-making, he seizes Maria from behind a door and drags her into a remote room.

One of the servants, a close friend of Sebastian, witnesses this scene and runs with all his might to the yard with his startling news.

The Indian blood of Sebastian dictates his further course of action.

He rushes up the veranda knocking the guards

off their feet, he breaks in like a storm among the merry guests. . . .

He demands Maria, his bride.

A fight starts at once, but is brought just as quickly to an end, for slim are the chances of Sebastian alone against all the assemblage.

Sebastian is sent rolling down the stairs for his insolence and effrontery.

A door opens and the intoxicated villain appears before the excited group.

Distraught, weeping, Maria slips by stealthily behind his back.

The tenseness of the situation is aggravated. But the "hacendado" is a good-natured old man. He does not want to mortify his guests, he does not want to spoil the feast.

To distract the people he issues orders to start the music, the fireworks and the games.

Maria is put under lock till next morning, pending the hearing of the case.

In the rattle of the music, the excitement of the games and intoxication of hilarity, the sad incident is forgotten.

The brighter the fireworks blaze, the more violent wrath rages within Sebastian's heart.

Vengeance germinates in his mind.

Vengeance begets conspiracy.

Three of his comrades pledge themselves to help him get revenge.

In an auspicious moment they direct the blazing sky-rockets into hay-stacks.

The flames spread like wild fire.

While the assemblage is panic-stricken, Sebastian and his associates provide themselves with arms and cartridges out of the landlord's supplies and make an attempt to release Maria from confinement.

But the guards fire back and the conspirators are forced to flee.

Under cover of night the fugitives evade persecution.

Morning overtakes them in a forest on the slope of a mountain.

Vending their way towards the mountain pass across the ridges, they plod laboriously through the thickest of the fairy-woods. The charros, however, on their fine horses, accompanied by the indomitable Sara and her cousin, make the pass first and intercept the fugitives.

Cross-firing breaks out in the tangle of the nopal-wood.

Sara, fascinated by the shooting, incessantly makes attempts to rush forward and her cousin has to keep her back at a distance from the whizzing bullets by sheer force.

Sara kills one of the peons and pays with her life for her daring.

A bullet finds its way to her heart through the watch she is so fond of. The mechanism of the broken watch trembles under the shots and slowly stops its movement.

Sara's cousin puts her body across his saddle and carries her away from the field of battle.

The shooting breaks out anew with increased violence.

The fugitives are retreating into the maguey fields.

In the stronghold of a huge cactus, three of them seek refuge.

The hissing bullets pierce the succulent leaves of the maguey plant and the juice, like tears, trickles down its trunk.

The cartridges are exhausted.

The peons make an attempt to flee.

The agile charros fling their lazos around the fugitives and hold them captives.

All torn, tottering Sebastian and two of his surviving friends are brought in upon the scene of Sara's funeral.

Eye for an eye . . . they pay with their lives for their daring.

Among the magueys, where Sebastian had worked and loved, he finds his tragic end. . . .

Beyond the great snow-white summits of the volcanoes the sun is sinking. The day is dying.

The large gates of the estate are closing.

Maria is set at liberty and goes looking for the body of Sebastian amidst the maguey plants.

Her appearance startles the buzzards and they fly away.

While over the high walls of the estate float the sounds of wailing.

A mournful, drawn-out wailing — the Indian farewell to the setting sun.

Maria finds the remains of her beloved, of him who was to become her husband, who had raised his arm in her defense . . . she sobs convulsively over his dead body.

Beyond the tall walls of the Hacienda the peons are singing their vesper song just as plaintive, as mournful, as their morning Alabado.

THIRD NOVEL: THE FIESTA

Time of the action—same as "Maguey"—that is—prior to the Revolution of 1910.

Action includes scenery of all the most beautiful spots of Spanish colonial style and influence in Art, buildings and people in Mexico.

(Mexico City, Xochimilco, Merida, Taxco, Puebla, Cholula, etc.)

The atmosphere of this part is of pure Spanish character.

PERSONS:

1. Baronita, picador and first lover
2. The Matador (played by champion matador David Liceaga)
3. Señora Calderón, one of the queens at the bull-fight
4. Señor Calderón, her husband
5. Hundreds of ritual dancers, "danzantes" in front of the Basilica de Guadalupe.
6. Crowds of pilgrims and penitents
Crowds enjoying the bull-fight and the floating gardens of the Mexican Venice—Xochimilco.

The Fiesta

Weirdness, Romance and Glamour constitute the make-up of the third novel.

Like the Spanish colonial *barroco* — works the stone into fanciful lace—work on the wire-ribbon of columns and church-altars. Thus the complex designs, the elaborate composition of this episode.



"Youthful beauty
blossoms on the
screen"—P. 6

(Below)—"The dwellers of Yucatan, land of
ruins and huge pyramids, have still conserved, in
feature and forms, the character of their ancestors,
the great race of the ancient Mayas."—P. 5





"Maria is forgotten."—P. 7



"Death comes along
dancing."—P. 13

All the beauty that the Spaniards have brought with them into Mexican life appears in this part of the picture.

Spanish Architecture, costumes, bull-fights, romantic love, southern jealousy, treachery, facility at drawing the gun, manifest themselves in this story.

In old pre-revolutionary Mexico the annual holiday in worship of the holy Virgin of Guadalupe is taking place.

Hence the abundance of merry-go-rounds, shows, flowers, the multitudes of people. Pilgrims from all parts of the country are coming to the feast.

Dancers of ritual dances are getting their fantastic costumes and masks ready.

The bishops and archbishops are donning their gorgeous feature robes.

The girls who are destined to appear as queens of the bull-fights are putting on their expensive combs and mantillas in a tremor of vanity.

And finally the heroes of this tale, the famous matadors, are getting dressed for the performance on the veranda of a Spanish patio, amid the tinkling of guitars and the sound of militant songs of the ring.

The best of the matadors is enacted by David Liceaga, the most renowned matador of Mexico and "champion" of the "golden ear."

In front of a pier-glass, swelling with the self-consciousness of their importance and grandeur, the matadors are putting on their gold and silk embroidered costumes.

More than the others, wriggles in front of the mirror, (the most concerned about his personal appearance) the care-free picador, the lazy Don Juan Baronita.

He is mindful of every detail, for an encounter more hazardous than the bull fight awaits him.

He has a date with another man's wife! Having dressed, the matadors drive to the chapel of the Holy Virgin, the patron of their dangerous art.

Having knelt before her altar, whispered to her his prayer, and begged her benediction, the best of the great matadors drive over to the quiet home of his mother to bid her—

Good Bye!

May be for the last time—

And on the plaza a multitude of some sixty-thousand people, amid hand-clapping, shouts its impatience. The orchestra in gayful tunes begins to play the opening official march and the matadors make their appearance in the arena.

During the parade the picador Baronita appears in full splendor, mounted on his white horse, and throws a stealthy glance in the direction where the queens are seated.

The belles of the city in expensive lace under the refreshing breeze of fans, and open coquetry, are filling the "Royal" box seats.

Baronita manages to locate the queen of his inflamed heart and give her his "killing" glance.

And as in the traditional "Carmen" the eyes of the matadors meet the dark eyes of the beautiful queens and as a tradition dictates, this glance kindles the flame of valor in the matadors' eyes.

The sixty thousand attendants release an Ah! of wonder the moment the bull runs out into the ring. The very famous David Liceaga displays all the beauty and elegance of the art of the matador.

Full of grace and valor he dances his "dance" on the margin of death and triumph.

He does not stir from his place even when the bull's horns come within a hair's breadth of his body; he does not tremble, but smiles serene, and to top it all he pets the sharp horns of the animal and this provokes an endless savage outburst of delight from the crowd.

But the bull, enraged by the teasing of Liceaga knocks down the horse of the infatuated Baronita.

And he is forced disgracefully to jump the enclosure under the roars of derisive laughter from the crowd.

Notwithstanding all this, his love remains true to him,—she gives him the high sign of the feasibility of their rendezvous.

In the meantime, in the town square, fairs and market-places, a crowd of many thousands are contemplating the ritual ceremonial dances of Indians dressed up in gilded brocade, ostrich feathers and huge masks.

Under the peals of the ancient Spanish church bells, under the sound of music and the rolling of beating drums, the thunder of exploding sky rockets, the feast flourishes. Under the roar of the exalted crowd, at the other place, the killed bull is taken away from the grounds.

A maelstrom of hats and unabating ovations accompany the triumphant exit of the valiant matador.

Baronita has now met his "queen." Wrapped up in one cloak, the pair of lovers make their way through the narrow Spanish alleys to the landing of the boats adorned with flowers.

Their boat sails by the floating gardens along the dreamland canals of Xochimilco, the so-called Venetia of Mexico.

In the shade of an awning under the sound of guitars and marimbas the pair of lovers will forget their troubles.

But trouble does not forget them.

The wife catches sight of her husband; the pair hide behind the curtain and a swift change of their course saves them from a tragic look.

The husband is furious, he is raving, because he can find no trace of his wife. A mad pursuit among the moving maze of flower-covered floating temples of love . . .

The boat of the amorous pair passes under his very nose and disappears among hundreds of other festively adorned boats.

In a retired nook of a remote canal the "Ship of Love" lands. Baronita conducts his forbidden love to the summit of a mountain, to a big stone crucifix, where they watch the sunset and exchange kisses.

In their moment of utmost bliss they are surprised by the husband. He draws his Spanish fancy-made pistol. He is ready to discharge it. And by pure miracle Baronita escapes the avenging hand . . .

The final song of the great feast ends the day.

Happy, romantic, is the finale of the story about

this ancient and beautiful Spanish holiday.

FOURTH NOVEL: SOLDADERA

The background of this story is the tumultuous canvas of uninterrupted movements of armies, battles and military trains which followed the revolution of 1910 until peace and the new order of modern Mexico were established.

Deserts, woods, mountains and the Pacific Coast at Acapulco, and Cuantla, Morelos, are the landscapes of this story.

PERSONS:

1. Pancha, the woman who follows the soldier—the Soldadera.
2. Juan, Pancha's soldier.
3. The sentinel, Pancha's second soldier.
4. Pancha's child.
5. The Army in march and fight.
6. Hundreds of soldaderas, wives of the soldiers, following the armies.

Soldadera

Yells, shouts, general havoc seems to reign in the small Mexican village.

At first one gets bewildered, one cannot understand what is going on—women are catching hens, pigs, turkeys; women are hastily seizing tortillas and chile in the houses.

Women wrangling, fighting, shouting at each other

What is up?

These are soldiers' wives, "soldaderas," forerunners of the army, who have invaded the village.

Those are the "soldaderas" getting provisions to feed their weary husbands.

One of them is Pancha; a machine-gun ribbon hangs across her shoulder, a big sack containing household utensils weighs heavily on her back

Having caught a chicken and voiced her snappish retort to the protests of its owner, she finds a convenient place for the day quarters.

The soldaderas are breaking camp by the bridge on the bank of the river, they are getting their brimstones—*metates*—out of their sacks, are husking corn, kindling fires, and the clapping of their palms, patting tortillas, into shape, seem to announce peace.

A little girl is crying and to console her, the mother, for lack of candy, gives her a cartridge.

The child sucks at the dum-dum bullet and rejoices over the glistening toy.

The weary army enters the village and the soldiers in ravenous anticipation inhale the smoke of the bonfires.

Clarions sound the call to "rest."

Artillery soldiers release the donkeys and mules from the dust-covered machine-gun carriages; the women are looking for their men.

Pancha finds her soldier, Juan.

She treats him to a roast chicken and hot tortillas.

Supper over, Juan rests his head in Pancha's lap and hums the tune the guitars are playing.

"Adelita" is the name of the song and this song is the *leitmotif* of the "Soldadera."

When overcome by exhaustion he falls asleep and his stentorian snoring joins in the general snoring chorus of sleeping soldiers.

Pancha washes his shirt—and cleans his gun.

At dawn, while the echo of the desert still reverberates with the soldiers' snoring, Pancha places five or six cartridges in Juan's gun and puts the gun by his side.

She packs her household belongings in her big sack and lifting it to her back she joins the crowd of women setting out on their endless pilgrimage.

Faint under their heavy loads, trying to calm the crying children, munching the tortillas left over from breakfast, the crowd of women runs along the dusty, deserted road.

Suddenly the loud voice of the author calls to Pancha:

— Say, "Soldadera."

Pancha stops, turns her head toward the camera first, she just stares; then, pointing her finger to her breast, she inquires silently: "Did he call her?" The Voice, again:

"Where art thou going, woman?"

She turns pensive, smiles enigmatically, shrugs her shoulders, as if ignorant of what to answer, parts her hands in the broad gesture women are apt to make when saying:

— "Who knows?" (*Quien sabe . . . ?*)

She is borne onwards by the strong current of women and gets lost in the big moving mass of humanity and in the dust that veils everything from the human eye.

Machine-guns are roaring.

The clatter of cavalry is heard.

A battle is raging.

Juan is fighting like all the rest of the soldiers.

He discharges his gun.

Shouts . . . "ora . . . arriba . . . Adelante" . . .

Rushes into attack amidst bursting shells.

Under the cars of a freight train the "soldadera" are praying for their fighting men.

They have suspended their "Santos"—the holy images of their dearest devotion—from the car wheel and placed their little votive lamps on the springs of the car axle.

The machine guns are silent.

The shooting abates.

The soldiers' shouts are no longer heard.

The soldaderas go to the head of the train, to the engine, and hence they look in direction of the ending battle.

The soldaderas rush up to meet them, scrutinize their faces.

Question . . . ! "Have you seen mine?"

The excited Pancha is looking for Juan.

Here they bring him wounded.

Pancha runs up to him.

Uncovers his face . . .

No, that is not he . . .

The soldaderas bandage up wounds, treat them to the best of their knowledge. Apply tortillas to the wounds and fasten them with willow fibres.

Juan is safe and sound but worn out, and he must get into the car of his troop for the officers and engines are blowing the whistles for departure.

Having seen him board the train, Pancha gets on the engine platform.

The angry voice of the sentinel calls to her.

"What have you there under your shawl?"

And lifting her rebozo, Pancha answers quietly: "Who knows, señor, it may be a girl or it may be a boy . . ."

The troops start off noisily. In the packed cars the soldiers are singing "Adelita"! And on the roofs, the soldaderas with their kitchens and children are squatted like crows.

They have kindled bonfires on the iron roofs and the patting of palms making tortillas seems to compete with the rattling of the car wheels.

The military train vanishes into the dark of night.

At daybreak the soot-covered stoker leaps from car to car of the train in motion—jumps among the wandering women and children.

On one of the cars he drops flat on his belly and shouts through the open door . . .

In answer to his call Juan, aided by his comrades, climbs up to the roof.

The rattling of the train drowns the words of the message the stoker has brought to Juan.

They run fast to the engine, frightening the sprawled women and on reaching their destination, they climb to the front platform.

Under the clothes hung out in the lanterns to dry, under soldiers' underwear waved by the wind, near the blazing bonfire, Pancha is sitting with her newborn baby.

And the same cross-guard seated close by, near a machine-gun, asks Pancha:

"—It is a girl or a boy?"

Among the mountains in the clouds, puffing with effort on the steep stretches of the road, the military train is advancing.

Another battle . . . !

Again the racket of machine-guns . . .

Again the soldaderas are awaiting the returning wounded soldiers . . .

This time Juan does not come back.

And when the fight is over amidst its smoking ruins Pancha finds the body of her husband . . .

She gathers a pile of rocks, makes him a primitive tombstone, weaves him a cross of reeds . . .

She takes his gun, his carriage belt, his baby, and follows the slowly advancing, tired army.

Her legs can hardly support her body, heavy under the burden of grief and weariness.

And then the same cross soldier walks up to her and takes the baby from her.

Pancha leans on the strong arm of her new husband in order not to fall and not to lag behind the army.

"Adelita" is the tune the tired bands are playing, falsely and out of rhythm.

The army has prepared for an attack, but the people from the city come up and explain.

The civil war is over.

Revolution has triumphed.

There is no need now of Mexicans fighting Mexicans.

The brass-band discovers a new source of strength

that enables it to play "Adelita" stoutly, solemnly and triumphantly.

Like peals of thunder roll the triumphant shouts above the heads of the soldiers.

The armies are fraternizing.

One might decipher on the banner—the last word of its device.

Towards Revolution.

Towards a New Life . . . says the voice of the author.

Toward a New Life! . . .

EPILOGUE

Time and location—modern Mexico.

Mexico of today on the ways of peace, prosperity and civilization.

Factories, railroads, harbors with enormous boats; Chapultepec, castle, parks, museums, schools, sporting-grounds.

The people of to-day.

Leaders of the country.

Generals.

Engineers.

Aviators.

Builders of new Mexico.

and

Children—the future people of future Mexico.

The work of factories.

The hissing of aero-propellers.

The whistles of work-plants.

Modern . . . Civilized . . . Industrial Mexico appears on the screen.

Highways, dams, railways . . .

The bustle of a big city.

New machinery.

New houses.

New people.

Aviators.

Chauffeurs.

Engineers.

Officers.

Technicians.

Students.

Agriculture experts.

And the Nation's leaders, the President, generals, secretaries of State Departments. Life, activity, work of new, energetic people . . . but if you look closer, you will behold in the land and in the cities the same faces.—

Faces that bear close resemblance to those who held funeral of antiquity in Yucatan, those who danced in Tehuantepec; those who sang the Alabado behind the tall walls, those who danced in queer costumes around the temples, those who fought and died in the battles of revolution.

The same faces—

but different people.

A different country,

A new, civilized nation.

But, what is that?

After the bustle of factory machines.

After the parading of modern troops.

After the President's speeches and the generals' commands—

Death comes along dancing!

Continued on page 52

MANIFESTO on "Que Viva Mexico"

"The notion of anyone doing the montage of Eisenstein's film except Eisenstein himself is outrageous to all the canons of Art. No economic situation justifies such an aesthetic crime."

—Waldo Frank

"Of the grandeur of the undamaged original (*The Last Supper*) we can only guess . . . dreadful restorations were made by heavy-handed meddlers; some imbecile Dominican monks cut a door through the lower central part; Napoleon's dragoons stabled their horses in the refectory and threw their boots at Judas Iscariot; more restorations and more disfigurements. . . ."

—Thomas Craven, MEN OF ART

TO OUR READERS

Last year, a great deal of space was devoted to a film entitled *Que Viva Mexico!*, which S. M. Eisenstein, the renowned Soviet director was making at that time. There were two articles on the film, one of them an authorized interpretation by Augustin Aragon Leiva, Eisenstein's special assistant throughout the production. In addition, there were ten pages of still reproductions, which, to quote Laurence Stallings, gave a "foretaste" of the film. The editors of *Experimental Cinema* were more than merely enthusiastic about it: they had been given a copy of the scenario by Eisenstein himself and they were convinced that *Que Viva Mexico!* would materialize, as no film had ever done, the highest principles of the cinema as a fine art.

There is now being released on the world market a movie called *Thunder Over Mexico*, which is what it is: a fragmentary and entirely conventional version of Eisenstein's original majestic conception. The story behind this commercialized version is without doubt the greatest tragedy in the history of films and one of the saddest in the history of art. It represents the latest instance of a film director, in this case a genius of the first rank, forfeiting a masterpiece in a hopeless struggle against sordid commercial interests.

We decry this illegitimate version of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!" and denounce it for what it is,—a mere vulgarization of Eisenstein's original conception put forth in his name in order to capitalize on his renown as a creative artist. We denounce the cutting of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!" by professional Hollywood cutters as an unmitigated mockery of Eisenstein's intention. We denounce "THUNDER OVER MEXICO" as a cheap debasement of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

As all students of the cinema are aware, Eisenstein edits ("mounts") his own films. Contrary to the methods generally employed by professional directors in Hollywood, Eisenstein gives final form to the film in the cutting-room. The very essence of his creative genius, and of his oft-quoted theory of the cinema, consists in the editing of the separate shots after all the scenes have been photographed. Virtually every film director of note has testified, time and again, to the revolutionary consequences of Eisenstein's montage technique on the modern cinema, and every student of the cinema knows how impossible it is for anyone except Eisenstein to edit his pictures.

"THUNDER OVER MEXICO" has not been edited by Eisenstein and yet is being exploited into as his achievement. The editing of "THUNDER OVER MEXICO" is not Eisenstein montage.

Out of approximately 200,000 feet of film shot by Eisenstein in Mexico, a picture of some 7,000 feet cut according to conventional Hollywood standards, has been produced,—an emasculated fragment of Eisenstein's original scenario which provided for six interrelated episodes, in which were included a dramatic prologue depicting the life of ancient Yucatan and an epilogue foreshadowing the destinies of the Mexican people. What has happened to this material?

Eisenstein's original prologue, which was intended to trace the sources and primitive manifestations of Mexican culture, thus projecting the most vital cultural forms among the Aztecs, Toltecs and the Mayans, has been converted into a pseudo-travelogue.

Worse than this is the fate of Eisenstein's original epilogue, which was intended to establish the timeless continuity of types from ancient Yucatan to modern Mexico, and which was meant to anticipate the revolutionary urge dormant in the descendants of those ancient races. Under the guidance of

Eisenstein's backers, who have never from the start shown a due consciousness of what the film is all about, the epilogue has now been converted into a cheerful ballyhoo about "a new Mexico," with definite fascist implications.

The remaining mass of material, consisting of more than 180,000 feet, is in danger of being sold piecemeal to commercial film concerns.

Thus, Eisenstein's great vision of the Mexican ethos, which he had intended to present in the form of a "film symphony," has been destroyed. Of the original conception, as revealed in the scenario and in Eisenstein's correspondence with the editors of *Experimental Cinema*, nothing remains in the commercialized version except the photography, which no amount of mediocre cutting could destroy. As feared by Eisenstein's friends and admirers, the scenario, written in the form of a prose poem, merely confused the professional Hollywood cutters. The original meaning of the film has been perverted by reduction of the whole to a single unconnected romantic story which the backers of the picture are offering to please popular taste. The result is "*Thunder Over Mexico*": a "Best-Picture-of-the-Year," Hollywood special, but in the annals of true art, the saddest miscarriage on record of a high and glorious enterprise.

For more than a year Eisenstein's friends and admirers in the United States have been appealing to his backers, represented by Upton Sinclair, to save the picture and to preserve it so that eventually Eisenstein might edit it. A campaign was even launched to raise \$100,000 to purchase the material for Eisenstein. Finally, a Committee for Eisenstein's Mexican Film was formed, consisting of the editors of *Experimental Cinema* and including Waldo Frank, Lincoln Kirstein, Augustin Aragon Leiva and J. M. Valdes-Rodriguez. All these efforts, however, were unsuccessful. It is now too late to stop the release of "*Thunder Over Mexico*."

But there is one alternative left to those who wish to save the original negative of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!"; the pressure of world-wide appeal to the conscience of the backers may induce them to realize the gravity of the situation and give the film to Eisenstein.

The purpose of this manifesto, therefore, is two-fold: (1) to orient and forewarn public taste on the eve of the arrival of a much misrepresented product, "*Thunder Over Mexico*"; and (2) to incite public opinion to bring pressure to bear upon the backers in a last effort to save the complete negative, both cut and uncut, for Eisenstein.

Lovers of film art! Students of Eisenstein! Friends of Mexico! Support this campaign to save the negative of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!". Do not be satisfied with any substitutes for Eisenstein's original vision! Make this campaign an unforgettable precedent that will echo throughout film history, a warning to all future enemies of the cinema as a fine art! ! !

Send letters of protest and appeal to Upton Sinclair, 614 North Arden Drive, Beverly Hills, California, and communicate immediately with the Committee for Eisenstein's Mexican Film, c/o Experimental Cinema, International Film Quarterly, 1625 North Vine Street, Hollywood, California.

EDITORS OF EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA.

Foreign Film Journals: Please copy! Immediate Propaganda essential! Film Societies: Duplicate this manifesto! Distribute to your members!

Write for extra copies.

Do not allow this cowardly assassination of Eisenstein's Mexican film!

NOTE: The above text represents the manifesto issued by EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA in June, 1933, at Hollywood, California, in the campaign to save the negative of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!". This was the first document of its kind ever issued on behalf of a motion picture, and it is especially significant as indicating the character and purpose of the already historical struggle to save one of the world's most important films. The manifesto was the first public protest against the destruction of a cinema masterpiece and, accordingly, we have reprinted the entire document here.

The Festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe: A few scenes of this material were transposed bodily from their original position in the film to the **Maquety** episode, where they were made to represent a house party at the Hacienda Tetlapayac, in the Sinclair-Lesser distorted version of "**Que Viva Mexico!**"—P. 10



"Full of grace and valor the matador dances his 'dance' on the margin of death and triumph."—P. 11



Sex appeal and a good photographic tone but no organization of mass, space and line. Light undramatic.



From **Blonde Venus** directed by von Sternberg.

Below, Josef von Sternberg who claims "Hollywood has nothing to learn".

"OH HOLLYWOOD, MY BELOVED HOLLYWOOD!"



I.

"Ob Hollywood, my beloved Hollywood!"

This rapturous exclamation falls from the lips of a small dumpy man with flowing sandy hair as he stands before his home on one of the hills that look down upon Hollywood's film factories. The little man lends a touch of the exotic and dramatic to his fervent declaration, for he wears a richly ornamented black velvet coat and his arms are outstretched as if offering a benediction.

The man is Josef von Sternberg. The time: 1927, the year in which his *Underworld*, a gangster film, was breaking box office records.

Underworld appeared at a psychological moment when people, wearied to a point of ennui by Hollywood's innocuous celluloid, were turning their attention to news about the exploits and acquisitive technique of racketeers in the lower brackets. Appealing to the violent bourgeois desire of getting something for nothing, but getting it at the point of a gun if necessary, *Underworld* became a hit. This motion picture glorified the gangster, Sternberg's false fantasy, based on a Nick Carter conception of social reality, gave the picture an effective if cheap brand of melodrama. His own irrational appraisal of the immediate acceptance of *Underworld* in a society in which art stagnates simultaneously with the economic and political disintegration of capitalism, led Sternberg to exaggerate grossly the importance of this picture and himself to film art. He began to regard himself as *the* artistic director in Hollywood. He implies that he is the messiah of film art in Hollywood. Hence, Hollywood should follow his methodology. His directorial colleagues he views with arrogance and disdain, although in both structure and content his work is just as slipshod and false as theirs. He continues to set himself up as an oracle of film opinion and from time to time issues statements on the cinema which should interest psychiatrists. He has thumbed his nose in public at Theodore Dreiser and Bernard Shaw whose social commentaries, although appreciated by many high school boys, would probably leave Sternberg distraught if he really tried to comprehend them. The backwardness of the Hollywood cinema and of Sternberg, as its self-appointed spokesman and as a director, is exemplified in one of his statements which illustrates a penchant for putting fictitious above intrinsic values in film practice:

"Hollywood has absolutely nothing to learn in motion pictures from any European country, neither from Russia or Germany".

This statement, like the outburst from his own hilltop, "Oh Hollywood, my beloved Hollywood", is pregnant with connotations at once amusing and

pathetic, for to observant film practitioner and layman alike it is plain that both of these messianic-Sternbergian remarks could be uttered only by a director who lacks sensitivity, who has a low standard of esthetic evaluation and an unbalanced philosophy of life and cinema.

But Sternberg can scarcely be called an astute spokesman, for his credo, "Hollywood has nothing to learn", if interpreted in the light of actual performance, can be said to mean that Hollywood's film makers, by virtue of their own incompetence and the "system" of production and the ideological disintegration to which they submit, are endowed with such extraordinary talent for injecting mediocrity and stupidity into their celluloid strips that it is obvious Hollywood has nothing to learn about the application of these conspicuously atrocious ingredients which shape the content and form of the bourgeois film.

What more fitting example of Hollywood's disregard for the film as an art and as a force for social betterment could be had than the fact that the lone exhibit of the American motion picture industry at the Chicago World's Fair was none other than the living presence of the MGM lion? What the promoters of the "Hollywood" concession at the Fair did not get from our film entrepreneurs they supplied in the best Hollywood manner with such banal side-shows as "Virgins in Cellophane", "Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden" and "Nudes of the Nations", with assurances from the obsequious barkers that "all the costume which each girl wears could be tucked into an envelope". Sternberg's Hollywood, which "has nothing to learn", offered a lion to the Exposition of a Century of Progress although the history of the motion picture in a social-historical-creative sense is replete with material for an exhibit of the first order. But to stage such an exhibit would necessarily be the job of outsiders, since the American motion picture industry is notorious for its lack of a social-historical-creative approach to the cinema.⁽¹⁾

From the time Sternberg made *Salvation Hunters* down to the present day, he has persistently posed as an artist, an affectation which afflicts a considerable number of Hollywood's "leading" directors, among them such over-rated men as King Vidor, Frank Borzage, C. B. DeMille, Clarence Brown and others whose chief claim to film leadership is rooted in their talent for *Kitsch*. Their work and Sternberg's are marked by a very narrow range in the use of the film's structural forms—a range so limited and inexpressive that aside from variations of subject matter their productions may pass for the output of one and the same director. None of Hollywood's directorial pretenders, however, has been as successful as Sternberg in transforming an affecta-

JOSEF von STERNBERG

B. G. BRAVER-MANN

(1) The editors of *Experimental Cinema* are establishing world-wide contacts for the organization of an International Film Exhibit to be shown in New York and throughout America. Film workers are kindly requested to communicate with the editors for information concerning arrangements for their exhibits. Likewise, all inventors, scientists and others who own any data of interest about the film.

tion into a generally accepted myth about an artistry which exists in none of his films.

II.

A film director is an artist in a complete sense when he employs his tools to present a dialectic treatment of nature and man, instead of picturing nature and man in a falsely romantic relation to each other; he seeks to develop new aspects of cinematic design in time and linear patterns, and image relationships, with which to intensify artistically the deeply realistic content of his thematic material; he seeks new forms and methods not for their formal values alone but for their integration with an understanding of social phenomena, so that he may develop effective, and if possible, heroic image ideas. Judged by this standard, what is the position of Josef von Sternberg as a director?

In Sternberg we have a director who concentrates on surface effects, who emphasizes the externals of film mechanics in a most inarticulate manner and represents his own delirious fancies as real life.

This highly publicized director has been connected with motion pictures for almost twenty years. He served as camera man, film cutter and scenarist before becoming a director. But what of his actual performance?

His productions show that experience as a camera man is no guarantee that this practitioner can use or direct the camera filmically; that having been a film cutter is no proof that a man has film-organizational mastery, and that having written scenarios is no indication of the capacity for conceiving themes based on a sensitivity to social experience on one hand and dynamic cinematic form on the other.

What if Sternberg has been a camera man? The tricks and tonality of his photography are repetitive and monotonous, devoid of both inner meaning and pattern indicative of feeling for screen design, and, in short, without style. Curiously enough, he and pseudo-aesthetic critics label his camera direction as the work of a "stylist".

What if Sternberg has graduated from the cutting room? His cutting — he has boasted to me that he cuts all his films — is among the worst examples of the simple linkage method, the most backward and unfilmic way of mounting film images and one that requires the least intellectual effort. The slipshod connection of the shots in his films shows a montage which fails to conceal this director's incredible ignorance of cutting. His films are completely lacking in that irresistible tempo and rhythm which mark the montage of great films.

What if he has been a scenarist? His scenarios — he writes them for his films⁽¹⁾ — call for a trivial methodology. They are given over to the propagation of gloomy vagaries without psychological and social insight. The inference is that a scenarist who deliberately writes such scripts must lack intellectual honesty. But a scenarist who produces them without

knowing how dishonest his material is, to speak charitably, is simply ignorant.

Sternberg cannot be accused of lacking a sense of integrity and honesty within the framework of his own distorted outlook, since he has fought, on occasion, in behalf of what he considers to be right. In one instance he walked out of a studio rather than compromise with what he thought were his convictions. Sternberg, however, is honest in that he believes in his own ignorance. Yet his natural inclination to wallow in it is hardly a valid enough reason for expecting the spectator to accept the ephemeral world and empty fantasies of his work, no matter how much he may believe in them himself.

Consider a few of the many examples of Sternberg's lack of psychological and social insight which marks his films: The problem of the young man driven frantic by unemployment in *Salvation Hunters* is evaded in the closing scenes which show him daydreaming on a plush sofa. In the same film, "the Brute", the burly captain of a barge, threatens with his fist a child of six, and physiological law is entirely discounted as the undersized, underfed young man hurls "the Brute" into an automobile. . . . In *The Docks of New York* a street-walker wearies of her wretched existence. She seeks a solution of her dilemma in suicide by jumping into the river. A ship stoker, who turns out to be sex-starved, sees her plunge and dives into the water to rescue her. He takes the girl to a dilapidated wharf hotel where he rents a room for her. But on the following morning she arises and props herself against a pillow and appears fresh as a daisy, her hair and finger nails so carefully groomed as to suggest that she spent the night in a luxurious beauty parlor. . . . In *The Case of Lena Smith* the young peasant mother climbs over a high barbed wire fence to enter a large orphans' ward in a hospital, seizes her baby born out of wedlock and escapes unobserved. . . . The more than middle-aged Herr Professor of *The Blue Angel* becomes a pimp because of his devotion to a cabaret singer of recent acquaintance; and despite having been dismissed from his post because of that infatuation, the picture fades out on a sequence in which the old professor mysteriously enters the school building on a day when it is closed and dies at his old desk. In this film Sternberg reveals such an abnormal interest in the singer's physical area below the hips that he succeeded in establishing Marlene Dietrich in the minds of filmgoers as the image of a slut. . . . His ignorance of the part played by economic determinism in the sex life of the capitalistic West led him to picture an Anglo-Saxon cabaret singer in *Morocco* as leaving her wealthy suitor on the edge of the desert, to join the female dregs that trail the French Foreign Legion so that she might be near her soldier. Sternberg's distorted conception of the relation between man and his socio-economic background shows why this director is incapable of thinking the behaviour of his characters through to a logical conclusion. And this is the film maestro who was assigned the job of filming *An American Tragedy*, a work whose picturization called for a director of

(1) This seeming privilege is reserved for "leading" Hollywood directors because they can be depended upon to embody all those ingredients in a scenario which give a picture maximum appeal at the box office and to the region below the belt but none above the neckline.

keenest social-analytic powers as well as mastery of film structure.

A director so sadly limited, technically and intellectually, as Sternberg appears to be must needs lean upon two props in order to get by with his distortions of reality which gibe so nicely with the degenerate ideology of the bourgeois cinema. These two props are (1) Pictorialism for its own sake and (2) player "personality". In this respect, Sternberg is no different than his directorial contemporaries in Hollywood whom he regards patronizingly. Although his pictorial talent is more developed than that of the majority of Hollywood directors, it is thin when compared with the grandeur of the pictorialisms in Murnau's *Faust* and *Dracula*. Moreover, Murnau, in addition to possessing the ability for imparting remarkable rhythm and continuity to his films, usually employed his richly pictorial mind for the exposition of plausible mood or situation. Beside the arbitrarily selected patterns of the images by Dovzhenko, Dreyer or Eisenstein, Sternberg's little pictorial talent is analogous to an insipid magazine illustration in contrast with a mural by Rivera or Orozco. The scenes in the productions by Hollywood's messiah of film art are very much like the first attempts of arty film amateurs who play with light, shadow and tone around, under and above objects with complete indifference to any inner meaning of the images. There may have been a time when Sternberg may have fitted into the field of illustrative photography — a field in which he properly belongs rather than in motion pictures — but the advances among photographers in their approach to the object have become so forthright that it is doubtful whether he could hold his own among them today.

Sternberg's pictorialisms rarely conceal his poverty in film-structural invention and forced, pretentious direction of players, light and camera. His concern with the pictorial for its own sake is one of the reasons why no Sternberg film ever presents an image with a relationship to another image for the purpose of developing an independent image idea⁽¹⁾ in the mind of the spectator, thereby enabling the spectator to discover for himself the significance of a situation or an idea. He is not equipped artistically, technically or mentally to build a film having the montage structure of such a picture as young Raisman's *In Old Siberia*, a Soviet film of minor importance.

Like other directors in the non-filmic tradition Sternberg is compelled to escape from the problems of film structure by depending upon a simple, un-

imaginative linear movement of his players and their physiological peculiarities. He does not, because he cannot, utilize light, player and inanimate object for building up a dramatic idea, a psychological or social implication as do Dovzhenko, Pabst and Eisenstein. It is impossible to imagine Sternberg conceiving a striking commentary with an acidity such as we find in one of the sequences of Stroheim's *The Wedding March*.

In this particular sequence the baron as a symbol of the nobility and the manufacturer as a symbol of the capitalist-bourgeoisie are dead-drunk as they haggle, while seated on the floor of a fashionable brothel, over the terms of marriage between the baron's son and the industrialist's crippled daughter.

It is interesting to note that when Sternberg wanted to improve upon the visual appeal of his films that he chose to go to Erich Pommer who excels at imparting a highly professional slickness to a motion picture, a quality which Sternberg today employs in his work as a veneer for the artificial content of his scenarios.

A director filming artificial content shuns any but artificially technical methods. Sternberg evades the ideological material necessitated by clearly-wrought image patterns. He would be incompetent to picture a theme like that of Carl Dreyer's *Joan of Arc* in which almost every image presented the sharp plasticity of the object. On the contrary, Sternberg evades the challenge of the object in his abuse of soft focus, lap dissolves and superimposed dissolves. The incoherence and superficiality of his thematic material, combined with his meaningless optical effects, only succeed in making the spectator feel the vacuity of this director's mind.

Sternberg's directorial incoherence and lack of proportion in dramatic values, due to his ignorance of the relation of man to his environment, are evident in his mechanical, schematic handling of players. They always strut. Whether the picture be *Underworld*, *The Docks of New York*, *The Blue Angel*, *Morocco*, *Dishonored* or *An American Tragedy*, the women are always pushing each other or posturing about with hands on their hips. Olga Baclanova, a better interpreter of character and pace than Sternberg, and Emil Jannings, are the only players who have successfully rebelled at Sternberg's inability to probe human types in relation to environment and behaviour. The players in his films strut—his pictures may be called *strutting* pictures—because he cannot build up image concepts and patterns with fragments of objects for the intensification of an idea or an emotion. His players must needs strut because the falseness of the content in his scenarios makes it impossible for him to cut a film so that it may present the greatest number of image ideas in the running time of the picture—even if he were able to cut a film in this manner. He *moves* instead of *cuts*, which is typical of all directors who build their films either in the non-cinematic pictorial and semi-theatre traditions of the motion picture. Sternberg's players strut because he cannot use the camera filmically for the selection of

(1) To be fair to Sternberg, we may recall the one and only instance of this montage in the many films he has made. This occurred in *The Case of Lena Smith*, viz., the scene of the man taking a revolver out of the dresser drawer, which cuts to a scene of the smoke floating past the dresser drawer but with the man out of the picture. The implication, of course, is obvious — namely, that the man killed himself during the interval between the two scenes. This set all Hollywood astir, and Welford Beaton in his *Film Spectator* pronounced this mounting as an example of "brains". However, it is more than likely that this use of contrast between two shots, elementary as it was, was due to one of Elder Will Hays' dicta that suicides must not be portrayed too explicitly upon the screen.

significantly graded and related images in time and space.

III

A director so inarticulate in visual film language, so fearful of a test of his feeble abilities by demands based upon a dynamic presentation of the object, is certain to flee from subject matter which requires a selection of formal means essential to a dialectic analysis of psychological and sociological phenomena. That is why Sternberg made a sorry mess of *An American Tragedy*. Evasion of the filmic treatment of the object characterizes every Sternberg film, a fact which explains why he has never directed a picture in which the material necessitates the totality of an idea built up by a series of images physically independent of each other in time and space. He would be like a lost child wandering in a mountain fastness if he had to cope with some of the powerful sequences which Dovzhenko composes out of such shots. Nor could Sternberg build up the impact of an emotion or a situation by analyses and sub-divisions of motion, either by breaking into it with in-between scenes or depicting its meaning with a succession of scenes as Eisenstein has done with telling effect in various sequences in *Cruiser Potemkin* and *Old and New*. The fact that neither Sternberg nor his Hollywood contemporaries have ever attempted to experiment with these montage forms shows how far they lag behind the progress of film practice in a purely formal sense. It would take a volume to point out instances of Sternberg's wrong treatment of camera placement in which certain average German and English directors outdistance him completely. I know of movie amateurs who could help him immeasurably with the problems of camera placement. On this point he could learn a great deal from the younger students at the Moscow State Film University. It can be said without fear of contradiction that neither Sternberg nor his Hollywood colleagues, with the exception of Rowland Brown, are even capable of mounting so simple an event as a speeding train. For that they might have to look up Trauberg's *China Express* and some of the early experimental films by Walter Ruttmann. Sternberg and the other Hollywood directors as a whole have wasted too much time with effects secured by non-filmic photography, legs, buttocks and glycerine tears.

Salvation Hunters was the first film directed by Sternberg. It was an independent venture by Sternberg, featured by such vicissitudes as lack of funds, materials and even food, for the director frequently did not have money for his lunches, all of which should have made Sternberg curious about the contradictions in a society in which creative effort is virtually hamstrung.

Although Sternberg assured the writer that *Salvation Hunters* was an effort of which he was ashamed, it appears that he has reversed his position and declared to others that he considers this his best picture. *Salvation Hunters* was made after Stroheim's *Greed* began shocking the acquisitive instincts of the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie. The visual grimness of the objects, locales and characters

in *Greed* was interwoven with the ideological content of the film. In *Salvation Hunters* however, Sternberg sought to imitate the optical realism of *Greed* for a theme that was the antithesis of Stroheim's picture. The caprice of the arty poseur—the fitful treatment of objects, players, camera and cutting—were unfolded in every shot. The sombre tonality of the mud, the dirt, the wharves and the water with its patterns of shimmering light were interesting only as photographic illustrations. As for having any montage value they were negligible. These shots showed that it is more important for a film to contain a powerful montage of image ideas even if it dispense with artistic photography than to consist of “arty” images recorded for their own sake with indifference to their filmic organization.

Thus, in his first directorial effort Sternberg revealed he was unaware that the conclusion of his theme was artificial and its montage the antithesis of dynamic constructive cutting. The tedious pace and long scenes of the picture, tiresome because they contained none of the tension and situation that justify long scenes, set forth Sternberg's deficiencies in film structure although up to the time he made this film he had worked at various jobs around film studios for twelve or thirteen years. It is also pertinent to add that the slow pace of his films suggests a feverish straining after a dignity entirely absent in the dope-laden content of his themes. But as *Salvation Hunters* cost \$5,000 one suspects that it was produced to show film magnates how cheaply a film might be manufactured. Sternberg succeeded in his objective since the film culminated in a directorial job with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

IV

However, in essentials Sternberg has been dead on his feet ever since he made *Salvation Hunters*. Bad montage and an amazing ignorance of the moving forces behind human behaviour and social reality cluttered up his subsequent films—*The Dragnet*, *The Last Command*, *The Docks of New York*, *The Case of Lena Smith*, all silent films, and such talkies as *The Blue Angel*, *Dishonored*, *Morocco*, *An American Tragedy*, *Shanghai Express* and *Blonde Venus*. Sternberg has nothing to learn in motion pictures but in *Shanghai Express* he flattered Trauberg and Dovzhenko, the former by imitating *China Express* both in genre and action while from Dovzhenko's *Arsenal* he adapted clichés from the freight train sequence. But the imitation of vital formal methods is inherent in a failure to realize that they also represent an elucidation of man and his relation to his immediate world.

Of course, the Hollywood cinema is so regimented that a dialectic analysis of social reality, artistically elucidated, is well nigh impossible. Nevertheless there are opportunities for a director even in Hollywood, if he have the will, ability and perception to single out incidents and situations in his thematic material which he may convert into images of social experience and give them vigorous filmic form. That this can be done is shown by Rowland Brown's *Quick Millions*, one of the few masterfully mounted

pictures that have come from Hollywood. But Sternberg has neither consciousness of reality nor consciousness of film form, both of which impel a director to create film reality.

It is well to note here that an ultra-reactionary organization like The Daughters of the American Revolution was keen enough to put its finger upon the social challenge to bourgeois religion, morals, economics and law in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*. The Daughters proceeded to meet that challenge by demanding that the National Board of Review, in which the D.A.R. plays a dominant role, protest to the Hays office against Dreiser's slashing attack. And despite the various shades of liberals and radicals who belong to it, the National Board of Review obeyed the dictum of the D.A.R., since it is inconceivable that the Daughters would cooperate with an organization which they could not influence. But all that Sternberg saw in Dreiser's novel was an illicit sex affair which ended in two killings, one of the girl by the young man and the other of the young man by the law. That bourgeois society molded and then by law murdered a young man reared in its image, escaped Sternberg. For that matter, there is not a single so-called "big" director in Hollywood who is intellectually, technically and artistically qualified to do justice to the theme in Dreiser's novel. The only director — Eisenstein — who was thus qualified was rejected by the American film industry. So great was Sternberg's exultation at the humiliation of a fine motion picture artist that after being assigned the picturization of *An American Tragedy* he arrogantly proclaimed that "Hollywood (meaning Sternberg?) has absolutely nothing to learn in motion pictures". Such defiance had in it too much the note of fear — the consternation of a novice lest a film made on American soil by Eisenstein would have sharply exposed the backward status of Hollywood cinema. Furthermore, Sternberg sought to conceal his own failure to understand Dreiser's social interpretation by confusing the controversy between Paramount and Dreiser with statements to the effect that all the content of so long a novel as *An American Tragedy* could not be filmed. And Ray Long, at the time already released from Hearst's editorial stables, erstwhile book publisher and now a story buyer for a film studio, also hauled out an opinion from the depths of his dubious profundity which amounted to a defense of Sternberg's attempt to camouflage his own unfamiliarity with social reality.

For present purposes it is well to offer a brief comparison with Fritz Wendhausen's silent film, *The Trial of Donald Westhoff*, made some years ago in pre-Hitler Germany and one of the most notable productions in the annals of cinema. Its theme, barring minor variations, was similar to that of *An American Tragedy* in that it portrayed the social bankruptcy of bourgeois society in its attitude toward the problems of youth and the effects of that society upon the weak, negative traits of a young man who seeks to adjust himself to it. From *The Trial of Donald Westhoff* Sternberg, who has implied that he has nothing to learn about films from any country, could derive something about fundamentals in structural cutting, rhythm and filmic-visual language; how to develop striking implications through intensively graded fragments of objects; how to direct players; how to exploit the properties of the camera with psychological insight; and how to interpret social experience. So well-planned, tightly constructed and sensitively directed was Wendhausen's picture that those who saw it remember it as a rare experience. Beside it Sternberg's version of an *American Tragedy* was a feeble pretense at film making; one which served indubitably as an exposal of his shallow conception of filmic, human and social values. A comparative showing of the two films, in spite of the fact that one is silent and the other audible, would deflate Sternberg as a director, shatter his pose as the messiah of film art in Hollywood and prove him to be a cock-of-the-walk who is one of the most retrogressive directors that ever set foot on a movie lot. Moreover, such a comparison would show that Eisenstein's exit from Hollywood holds one clear implication — namely, that Sternberg and the other "leading", "eminent" film maestros of Hollywood could not risk the inevitable reactions which would have followed the showing of an American-Eisenstein film in American film houses. The presence of Eisenstein in Hollywood meant that the tinsel foundations of Sternberg's and of many other directorial reputations in Hollywood were threatened!! And *that could not be!* How the colony must have rejoiced at Eisenstein's exit. Who knows but that in their degradation they may have echoed the Sternbergian refrains of "*Hollywood has nothing to learn*" and "*Oh my Hollywood, my beloved Hollywood!*" — the Hollywood which is being destroyed by its own incompetence and the general crisis now shaking the foundations of capitalist society.

Still from **Hell on Earth**,
first international sound
film in English, French
and German. Directed by
Paul Trivas.



TWO NEW FILMS TO BE SEEN THIS WINTER



A still from **Lot in Sodom**,
directed by Watson and
Webber.

MY METHOD

As related to L. Linhart and translated by K. Santor

After the Revolution the Ukrainian cinema was forced to make its start at the very foundation by erecting studios and by creating a new staff of film-workers.

I began my film-work in the Wufku Studios, which are now known as "Ukrainian-Film" and where I have been working up to now.

Two pictures form the main turning-points of my work: *Arsenal* and *Soil*. I create my pictures on the basis of social motives. The story itself has no value for me unless it is the resultant of a certain social form. This point of view determines also the method of my work. I call it *Synthetic Method*:

Out of a great quantity of material, which would suffice for the creation of five or six pictures, I make one single film, linked together by unusually strong tension. It represents a certain condensation of the material into one single whole.

I choose my characters in such a way that they have the ear-marks not only of a film-hero, but of whole social groups. It is the well-known "method of types" of Soviet cinematography.

Arsenal is the first turning point of my work.

(Dovzhenko considers his two preceding pictures, *Diplomatic Luggage* and *Zvenigora*, purely as the studies for his creative work. L. L.)

It has an historical basis:

- the end of the Imperialist War of 1914-1918
- the decay of the Russian lines
- the return of the soldiers to their homes
- their stay in the territory of the Ukraine
- and the first outbursts of revolution.

There arose in Ukraine during the Revolution, *two chief problems*: national and social.

The national problem was the object of activity of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie and of a section of the intellectual workers. These men, in order to attain their national interests, sacrificed the social ones which were defended by workers, farmers and the remaining intellectual workers. This conflict of interests was the reason for the disunion between the bourgeoisie on the one side and the proletariat on the other side.

This is the very idea on which *Arsenal* is based. It contains material which would really do for five or six pictures. But it is made in such a way that *through the smallest amount of material, which is at hand, is expressed the greatest quantity of ideas and social emotions*.

Arsenal expresses the struggle of the workers to achieve a Soviet government in the Ukraine. It is a fighting-picture which condenses the above-mentioned events; it comprises not only Kiev (Kyjiv)

with its environs and outlying districts, but Ukraine as a *whole*.

THE SECOND TURNING-POINT IS *Soil*

which also documents the proper method of the Soviet cinema in the representation of material, a method which corresponds rigorously to the content of a picture.

Just as there exist in the world two political systems — Communist and capitalist—, so there are *two systems of cinematography*. On the one hand, Soviet cinematography; on the other hand, French, American, etc. cinematography.

The subjects of American as well as European cinematography are: love, strong hero, beautiful women, beautiful scenery, toilettes, luxury, etc. They have been successful in finding certain audiences in the Old as well as in the New World. The Soviet cinema was also compelled to find certain elements to gain the favor of its proletarian public. It had to find a firm way and the result was that it gained not only the favor of its own Soviet public, but also the enthusiasm of sections of the audience in capitalistic states, especially in Europe.

The Soviet cinema found its public because of these elements:

- masses, crowds, mobs;
- colossal movements;
- special subjects;
- special camera angles;
- tempo.

In *Soil* I wished to work in another way. I wished to eliminate by means of the great speed of the proper motion all the naturally effective passages; and I chose also a simple subject. A concrete instance will show how I worked:

Straight field, common village, common men. These are the three most common elements, which enabled me to rely only on my art and on my man-actor. From time to time I do not use an actor at all.

In *Soil*, for instance, one of the principal parts is played by a simple stovemaker.

In working with a non-actor, I must use

A SPECIAL METHOD.

What is the difference between a non-actor and an actor? A non-actor does not know the technical ways and what to do with time, (i.e., with time in a picture, with the duration of speed and of movements, etc.) The problem is to create a type of situation in which the non-actor, just as the actor, would forget that he is playing before the camera; in other words, to create a situation in which a non-actor is not playing but *working*. Then it often occurs that the director forgets his role as a director and influences the non-actor as man to man. It

is necessary that a non-actor should *feel* what is demanded of him.

There are sometimes cases when it is very difficult to explain to a non-actor. In such instances I use the so-called

PROVOCATIVE METHOD OF WORK:

To force a non-actor to make a certain grimace or movement. To *provoke* him to do it. For instance, a scene requires astonishment; — then, to provoke in him the expression of this astonishment by the aid of the feats of a skillful juggler.

MASS MOVEMENTS, MOVEMENT OF MASSES represent the fundamental conception of my picture *Soil*. Not a great subject, but, instead, the factors constituting a social state. My task was to evoke through these factors certain associations in the spectator. My work was guided by

ONE MAIN DIRECTIVE:

To create a picture which would lure the spectator to see it *not only once*, but to go and see it *several times*. If we can look many times at Raphael's or Rembrandt's pictures; if we can always read Byron or Goethe, or hear Beethoven's music, or follow Shakespeare's lines, why should it not be possible to see also several times a valuable, artistic film?

Or,

WHICH IS MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO AN INTELLECTUAL PROCESS,—

to make a picture which the spectator looks at only *passively*, being in the theatre with his girl or sweetheart, and after leaving it, he lights a cigarette and five minutes later forgets all that he has seen,

or to make a picture which the spectator does not fully understand the first time he sees it because of the new method, but which incites in him a certain unrest, *which forces him to think, to meditate, to be active?*

I am convinced that only this latter method is the right one and that it is just by this method that we are able to *disentangle films from their present embryonic state and to create a film that may be called a valuable contribution to art.*

SOUND

represents the second turning-point in the development of cinematography. It has entirely changed the physiognomy of the cinema. There is occurring today a certain kind of transition from the silent film to the sound-film. It is the talking-picture, which in its present form is the greatest mistake as far as the sound-film is concerned. The "talkies" may be compared to the worst stage ventures and, apart

from this, they are destroying the internationalism of the cinema. They are making it unintelligible, but

SPEECH

can be used in a picture in an international sense. Imagine, as a simple instance, a panic in a big stock exchange: men are talking here in *different* languages, but in spite of this we know that they are expressing panic, fear, fight. Another instance: A ship with fifty sailors of different nationalities. The sailors do not understand the words of their languages; the price of the cargo has fallen in the stock exchange and the ship must be destroyed; this news is caught by the radio-telegrapher who does not understand the languages of the sailors but tries desperately to explain it to them; the sailors do not understand the *words*, but they begin to understand the *meaning* of his language; they see horror, death; they look for rescue; and, though they speak different languages, they understand each other quite well now. In both instances we may see the relation of sound, in our example of *word*, to the image and even to the whole composition of the film.

Apart from words, there are a great many NATURAL SOUNDS

which are just as expressive, emotional and rich as is the word in a sound-picture. But up to now they have not been fully utilized. They serve as mere illustrative material, while actually they have such great possibilities as far as the artistic synthesis of sound and image is concerned.

And then there is another element in a sound-picture, which is not to be forgotten:

SILENCE.

How colorful, how emotional an element is silence in a sound-film! It may seem that silence is always the same, but, for instance, you surely can see the difference between the silence in a room and the silence in polar countries!

From these instances we may see also the importance of

THE CONNECTION OF SOUND WITH IMAGE:

We connect sound with image merely mechanically. Sound must not be reproduced merely because it is, itself, a fact, a reality (for its own sake). First we ought to realize what a sound-film really is, and then we shall not confine ourselves to the mere recording of sound, but we shall strive to attain artistic *creation* on the basis of the relations and proportions of sound to the image.



HOLLYWOOD VERSUS AMERICAN REALITY

First of a series of comparative shots dealing with the American scene

Above—The Bowery as Hollywood sees it. Still from **The Bowery**, an M-G-M film.



To the right — The Bowery as it actually is. Still by the New York Workers' Film and Photo League.



THE BOWERY



Masses scattered. No design of individual units. Result: CHAOS.



From **Hell's Highway**
directed by Rowland Brown.

COMPOSITION OF THE FRAME

Shapes, masses and stress,
dramatically organized.



From **In Old Siberia** directed by Raisman



DZIGA VERTOFF

Dziga Vertoff, the Russian film-pioneer is on a tour through Europe. He has been in Berlin for a few days, in Paris, London, Holland, and everywhere he has given lectures on Russian film-art, on the film-art in general and on his own sound-film *Enthusiasm, Symphony of the Don-Basin* in particular.

A talk with Vertoff pays. For is he not the great discoverer of new possibilities in filming? For the greater part we owe to him the notion of construction, the foundation of all film-aesthetics and still now, every new film which he produces is a seeking for new forms of expression. It does not affect him that others popularize the possibilities discovered by him, and get credit for it. He doesn't want the great international cinema-crowd. He seeks the film, that is; the film as a special and independent means of expression (which needn't necessarily be a form of art to him).

In 1919, he started his first attack on the film-industry of that time by condemning the Russian comedy-film, by means of a manifesto and by demanding the fabrication of pictures, without actors, without action, and without artificial scenery. He also pleaded for the sound-film which couldn't, at that time, be foreseen at all, in that same manifesto, which could not be published until 1921.

But before that Vertoff had achieved some practical work, namely when in 1918 he arranged and made up forty weekly news-films after the principles of the *Film-Eye* group, supplied by him.

In 1919, he made his first great picture, the historical documentary film, *A Year of Revolution*, out of existing film-material. One year later it was followed by *The Struggle of Tsaritsin*, again a documentary film which, however, in striking contrast to the methods of that time, he arranged out of small groups of two or three pictures. This film was his first step in the direction of his last and most famous silent-picture *The Man With the Camera*.

In 1921 were published two sensational manifestos—"one destructive and one constructive" as Vertoff calls them himself. The first demand in these manifestos was that the programs in the cinemas should no longer consist of 99 percent acted films and 1 per cent of documentary films, but for 75 per cent of documentary ones (actual, scientific and culture films), and, at the most, for 25 per cent of acted pictures. It was called the *Lenin Proportion* as Lenin, who has asserted himself that the actual news-film was to be the foundation for cinematography, had exacted a similar demand. In the manifesto, it was pointed out that also in daily life the stage takes up about 10 per cent of the time and that one is wrong in including the general means of expression "Films" in that tenth part. So the group "Film-Eye" demanded that film-studios

should be built in which merely documentary films were to be produced, not only for Russia, but for the whole world.

The "Film-Eye" also contains the program of Vertoff and his men. As the microscope and the telescope are means by which the eye can see small and distant objects, so the film-eye—"the camera"—is a means for the human eye to conquer space as well as time and, besides, the subjective human way of seeing. Therefore the film is the ideal means to render facts, to teach people to see in an organized way, to show them that which—through the difference in time or place—they cannot spot with the naked eye.

After the manifesto on the "Film-Eye" Vertoff brought us one on "Film Truth." In the period from 1922-25 he produced 23 small and great films, which he called "Film-Truths" and which were devoted to the most divergent subjects. Vertoff enumerates some of them: *Spring, Two Worlds, The Black Sea, The White Sea, Moscow; Today, Tomorrow, Yesterday, Pioneers, Radio and Lenin*. All these films were documentary, but made up in a very unnatural way. Neither the connection of time nor that of place is respected. The pure film-force of contrast and harmony, the impulse of the didactic construction, leads the composition. This Vertoff style forms the greatest possible contrast with the usual style of acted films and yet, one day a man appears who seeks the middle between two poles and who connects the form, the composition and the scenery of the "film-truths" with the theatrical means of acted films: Eisenstein produces his *Potemkin*.

In the meantime in 1923 there appears Vertoff's film, *The Film-Eye*, in which he realizes his theories in a strictly dogmatic way. In 1925, *March Soviet*, a striking symphony of the raising of a new society; starting from hunger, misery and death and rising to an apotheosis of the new life. In 1926, follows a sound-film experiment, *The Sixth Part of the World*, a heavy political film, accompanied by spoken text, which was broadcast from a wireless station into the film house. In 1927, Vertoff produces *The Eleventh Year*, a non-speaking film the construction of which is on a musical foundation. And in 1928, his last silent picture, *The Man With the Camera*. With this the first part of Vertoff's work comes to a close, for *Enthusiasm*, which he produced in 1930, is according to him, not his last but his first picture. (This explains Vertoff's attitude towards the sound-film.)

Also when making this sound-film, Vertoff at once found his own method. From the very beginning he did not take any notice of the carefully constructed theories of the technical men. Whilst these gentlemen gave severe orders that at two miles distance round the studio no noise was to be made,

or else the filming in the studio would surely come to nothing, Vertoff with his apparatus went straight to the most uproarious spot in the whole of Russia, the Don Basin. He didn't want to have anything to do with the sound-proof studio; he didn't even condescend to make one single studio-picture. On the contrary he hung his microphones in spots where there was so much noise that the human ear couldn't take it all in. He placed his camera on the ground which trembled incessantly through the working of the engines. He made his pictures deep under the ground and sometimes in scorching heat. With his camera he climbed upon moving trains. He was present everywhere. With his film eye he saw all without being seen himself!

For Vertoff doesn't use artificial scenery. He surprises life. He spies on it unseen from a hiding place, sometimes at a very great distance, for which he has a special filming system. But notwithstanding this systematic avoidance of all that is unreal, *Enthusiasm* is anything but a natural rendering of sound. For in Vertoff's hands, no film remains a reproduction of reality. He frees the film from an

inferior position, and calls it to life, by means of a dynamic setting. Not only time and place have been torn asunder but also picture and sound are often separated, where they belong together. This film is not subdivided chronologically but consists of themes (march theme, theme of heavy toil, theme of sports, of a rest day, etc.) and has been composed of combinations and contrasts of these themes. Also, the sound is free from its natural functions and has a dynamic effect of its own by way of combination and contrast. More than once, two, three or four totally different sound-complexes are put together. The human language is at times only audible by means of a telegraphic Morse code. But nowhere has the sound been made artificially. It is everywhere taken straight from real life.

Of course Vertoff is full of new plans. First of all on his journey he collects material for his new work. His film eye is always vigilant, and then he has another plan which has reached a further status: A sound film *Lenin* again without actors, with the person of Lenin as found in the historical film-material.

JOSEPH SCHILLINGER

EXCERPTS FROM A THEORY OF SYNCHRONIZATION

I. INADEQUACY OF ART THEORIES TO THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE.

Literature: Quantitative and accented systems of versification do not provide enough plasticity to match the natural flexible flow of a tongue.

The metric system turns into a Procrustean bed for the over-developed body of a living and evolving language.

Music: Music is still waiting for its emancipation. The linguistic stamp is still revealed here and there.

Enough syntactic cages and rhyming boundaries still exist in the music of our day.

The creative and the interpretive instinct found its way out of these stuffy cells long, long ago.

The scholastic theory routine, side by side with the archaic notation, are too rude to express the subtlety of "deviations and violations."

The rhythm theory of the civilized world, originated and expounded in German regiment quarters ("*eins, zwei; eins, zwei*"), is but the first step in evolution of rhythm and is far behind its organic forms.

Cinema: Cinema was born in the age of the mature theatre, the wilful neglect of technique in painting, with sculpture searching for new "ways and means"; architecture experiencing its first renaissance since antiquity; poetry pursuing music, and music trying to escape from this honorable affiliation.

The past of photography before the birth of cinema was not a very glorious one, but it fostered in the visual arts an attitude of respect toward optics: lense and illumination became a "condition sine qua non." . . .

Without any art theory of its own, cinema has

adopted bit by bit, and very eagerly, manners and attitudes from the various sources: literature, theatre, photography, and even music. A comparatively improved system of sound photography came into existence and application before the "motion picture people" made up their minds what to do with it. You know, they are too busy to think, but always ready to act. This mental and muscular attitude has already done plenty of harm and will do more. Accustomed to producing plays on the screen in silent form, they proceeded with the same, only making acting individuals talk. The other revelations were: to see and hear a band playing, a dancer tapping while music played, a Beethoven trying to express the narrow path of the Panama Canal. . . . We also experienced some unconsciously dialectic productions: "hula-hula" dances at the Long Island Paramount Studios, and the U. S. battleships maneuvering in Honolulu.

The alliance of cinema and music has already given most incredible results: A Rubinoff in full dress playing one of the numerous violin banalities (close up) in a foreground of ever-changing colorful wilderness of a rugged landscape. The idea is: because some essential improvements were recently made in sound recording as well as in color photography, one has something to do with the other. And as noobdy is anxious to listen to a violin in a dark hall any more, let them have a "visual accompaniment."

In any case, if there is such difficulty in handling an individual art form because of false premises and uncertainty in method, it should be many more times difficult, and not quite safe for posterity, to manipulate two or more arts at once, unless an adequate method will be adopted.

II. GENERAL PREMISES.

A. Negative.

Fortunately, there is a point on which all true artists agree; in order to produce a work of art, it is necessary to induce order into relations of art material. This is called "rhythm" or "composition." Nevertheless, the anarchy starts right from this point. What is rhythm, what is composition? One offers a fluent transition from one moment to another. The other prescribes conflicts at any time: conflicts between successive visual moments, conflicts between sound moments, and finally, conflicts between any optical and acoustical moments.

No doubt, for any particular purpose a group or a system of determined modifications can be adopted with the best result serving a special purpose. But it seems very naive to ascertain conflicts as a permanent necessity. It is untrue from politico-economical standpoints: the working class is struggling for its happier and easier future and not for the sake of the struggle. It is untrue as well from the reflexological viewpoint: constantly repeated reflexes of the same kind lose their intensity. Continuous evolving of dramatic conflicts does not intensify the audience's response. Dramatic quality (accumulated tension) in art is due to certain phenomena known to technology of art, which are somewhat similar to electric resistance obtained through a system of coils. In musical melody, for instance, it is due to such factors as relationship of time to pitch, revealed in the number of revolutions around the pitch axis and the difference in frequencies between the axis and its related climax.

B. Positive.

The first requirement for the theory of art is that it should be a theory, i.e., such a logical system which should include all art phenomena of the past, present, and future as different phases revealing different processes that are parts of the theory. In other words, it should take such a position towards art making as mathematical or theoretical physics takes towards experimental physics. Then the actual products of art will not be "exemptions from the theory," but will dissolve in the magnitude of the law and its modifications. The universality of this theory requires that its premises should be based on observations of natural phenomena and conclusions drawn therefrom. These premises are: the space-time four-dimensional continuum and vibratory periodic phenomena. To produce a desirable quality in art it is necessary to know the technology and the mechanics of art on the one hand, and psychophysiological reactive processes on the other. The quantitative differences and interactions of all these components result in what appears to us as "art quality."

III. ESSENTIALS.

Every art component is a continuum, and as such, in two dimensional graphic representation, result in an equilateral hyperbola. All points, therefore, rational as well as irrational, can be found on this hyperbola. The amount of precision with which an integral component should be used determines its differentials. Normally, the perceptible range of an art component consists of a group of points on the hyperbola, not very remote from its vertex.

This range, undoubtedly, will expand in the future owing to auxiliary optical and acoustical devices: higher frequencies of sound waves, ultra and infra light rays. The integral of rhythm in any art component can be expressed through the following series as a universal law of composition:⁽¹⁾

$$\begin{aligned} &+00 \\ (1) \quad \delta x = &-00 -x^n -2 -1 -1/x (-1/x)^n 0 \\ &-00 \end{aligned}$$

$$(1/x)^n \quad 1/x \quad 1 \quad x \quad x^n \quad 00$$

where the negative values indicate the absence of the component or of one of its parameters.

Instance:

The foundation of European music in XVIII-XIX centuries is usually composed with $x = 2$, then—

$$\begin{aligned} &00 \\ \delta_2 = &0 \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^n \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad 2/2 \quad 2 \quad 2^n \quad 00 \\ &0 \end{aligned}$$

or, as an average form:

$$\begin{aligned} &2^4 \\ S = &\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^4 \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^3 \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad 2/2 \quad 2 \quad 2^2 \quad 3^3 \quad 2^4 \\ &\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^4 \end{aligned}$$

In musical language this will mean: the first step in fractioning of a unit (the process occurring the left side of $2/2$) known as a musical measure

$$\text{will be: } \frac{2}{2} = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} +_2; \text{ the second step:}$$

$2/2 + \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{4} +_1 \frac{1}{4} +_2 \frac{1}{4} +_3 \frac{1}{4} +_4$ etc., when t_1, t_2 are the consecutive time units. The first step in factoring of a unit (the process occurring on the right side of $2/2$) and known as the process of building groups of musical measures or phrases will be: $2/2 \times 2 = 2$; the second step: $2^2 + 4$; the third $2^3 = 8$ etc.

Instance:

This case being expressed graphically through an alternately moving segment of a straight line (being in this case a trajectory) growing at uniform speed under right angle will mean:

$$\text{if } \times = 2, \text{ then— } 2/2 + \frac{1}{2}t_1 + \frac{1}{2}t_2 \quad (\text{Fig. 1})$$

$$2/2 = \frac{1}{4}t_1 + \frac{1}{4}t_2 + \frac{1}{4}t_3 + \frac{1}{4}t_4 \quad (\text{Fig. 2})$$

where the dotted lines express the axis of $2/2$. Therefore: $2/2 \times 2 = 4$ will be: $T_1 = 2/2 = t_1 + t_2$

$$(\text{Fig. 3-}) \quad (\text{Fig. 4})$$

or

$$T_1 = t_1 + t_2 + t_3 + t_4 \quad (\text{Fig. 5}) \quad (\text{Fig. 6})$$

or

Or any of the other variations of the same design through the four quadrants.

Musicians usually call this kind of composition "square music," which in linear design will mean:

(Fig. 7)

If \times is represented by a binomial and its total value can be represented through $3/3$, for example, then—

$$\times = 2/3 + 1/3$$

or

$$\times = \frac{2}{3} + \frac{1}{3}$$

Referring to a plane is gives the following application: if two sides of a rectangle are related as

2:1, and a unit = $\frac{1}{2}$ inch:

(Fig. 8)

The exterior sides determining the arcs of the second power will be:

$$\begin{aligned} \times &= 1/3 + 2/3 \\ (2-3 + 1-3)^2 &= 4-9 + 2-9 + 2-9 + 1-9 \end{aligned}$$

(Fig. 9)

Proceeding with higher powers of X in the form of a binomial fraction, one can split any given area into many fractional areas reserving the inherent relation of the whole. This is known as "harmonic division," though the power process has never been applied to it consciously.

Synchronization of the visual-audible does not necessarily mean one to one correspondence. Different components can be correlated through all the infinite variety of their different powers and different modifications of the same powers. Different parameters of the same component follow the same principle. This means that the continuum of one or more components can be represented through a system of parabolas, where the location of points expressing different parameters can be determined. For instance, a certain tone applied for musical purposes may have $p = -3x$ (relation to the pitch axis), $t = (1/5)^2$ and i (intensity) $= 2x$.

There are different ratios of correlation serving different purposes. For instance the rhythmic center for an image on a given area will be more dynamic or dramatic at the ratio 4:3 than at 1:1. The same is true referring to time for a whole composition: the suspension of a climax will be more effective at the ratio 3:2 than at 4:3—as it develops later, it will seem tenser. All the variety of possible forms of rhythm values can be obtained through a complex which is incorporated in my theory of rhythmic cycles. This theory is built on three premises:

- (1) physical—periodic phenomena
- (2) Mathematical—powers
(algebra)
- (3) mathematical—combinations and permutations
(combinatory analysis)

The derivative values obtained through interference of periods taken in different ratios for their periodicity gives a foundation for the generation of rhythm. All other modified forms are due to permutation and powers.

Interference of two periods in 2:1 ratio, in rectilinear representation,

(Fig. 10)

will not give any new rhythm but will split the first period into the inverted value of the ratio $1/2$. The resultant period will appear as the second of the two periods with interference at its odd places. This might physically result in periodic intensification by coincidence of phases or, the reverse, in periodic disappearance of the component by opposition of phases. In practical application to rhythm, in both cases it amounts to grouping.

3:1 ratio will be expressed

(Fig. 11)

(Fig. 12)

The uneven rhythm values of derivative forms are obtained through interference of two or more periods of the second order if neither of their terms equals one. Therefore the simplest case will be: 3:2

(Fig. 13)

then the resultant of interference will be:

(Fig. 14)

$$\begin{aligned} 3 \times 2 &= 6 & \times &= 6/6 \\ px &= 2-6 + 1-6 + 1-6 + 2-6 \end{aligned}$$

In the same way 4:3 ratio—

(Fig. 15)

then the resultant of interference will be:

(Fig. 16)

$$\begin{aligned} 4 \times 3 &= 12 & \times &= 12/12 \\ px &= 3-12 + 1-12 + 2-12 + 2-12 + 1-12 + 3-12 \end{aligned}$$

Rhythmic cycles obtained in such a manner have the three following characteristics:

- (1) periodicity—(through uniform value of units and recurrence of the whole cycle after completion.)
- (2) symmetry—(in relation to the axis point: an inverted symmetry providing contrast at the same time.)
- (3) balance—(formed around the axis or at the axis point, when the number of terms is $2n$ or $2n+1$.)

A rhythmic cycle, once obtained, provides many variations even at its first power.

Instances

$$(3+1) + (2+2) + (1+3)$$

P4:3 =

12

being used with such a grouping provides three variations:

$$\begin{aligned} &(3+1) + (2+2) + (1+3) \\ &(2+2) + (1+3) + (3+1) \\ &(1+3) + (3+1) + (2+2) \end{aligned}$$

Grouping by single terms will give 6 variations through displacements and 36—through permutations.

Examples of application.

A. Time application in music:

(Fig. 17) in quarter note units

B. Pitch application in music on axis c. $1/12$ unit amounts to $12 \times$ square root of 2.

(Fig. 18)

C. The two results (time and pitch) combined:

(Fig. 19)

D. Corresponding results on a plane for development of a synchronized design:

- (1) extension values for straight segments under 90 degree angle; const. direction

(Fig. 20)

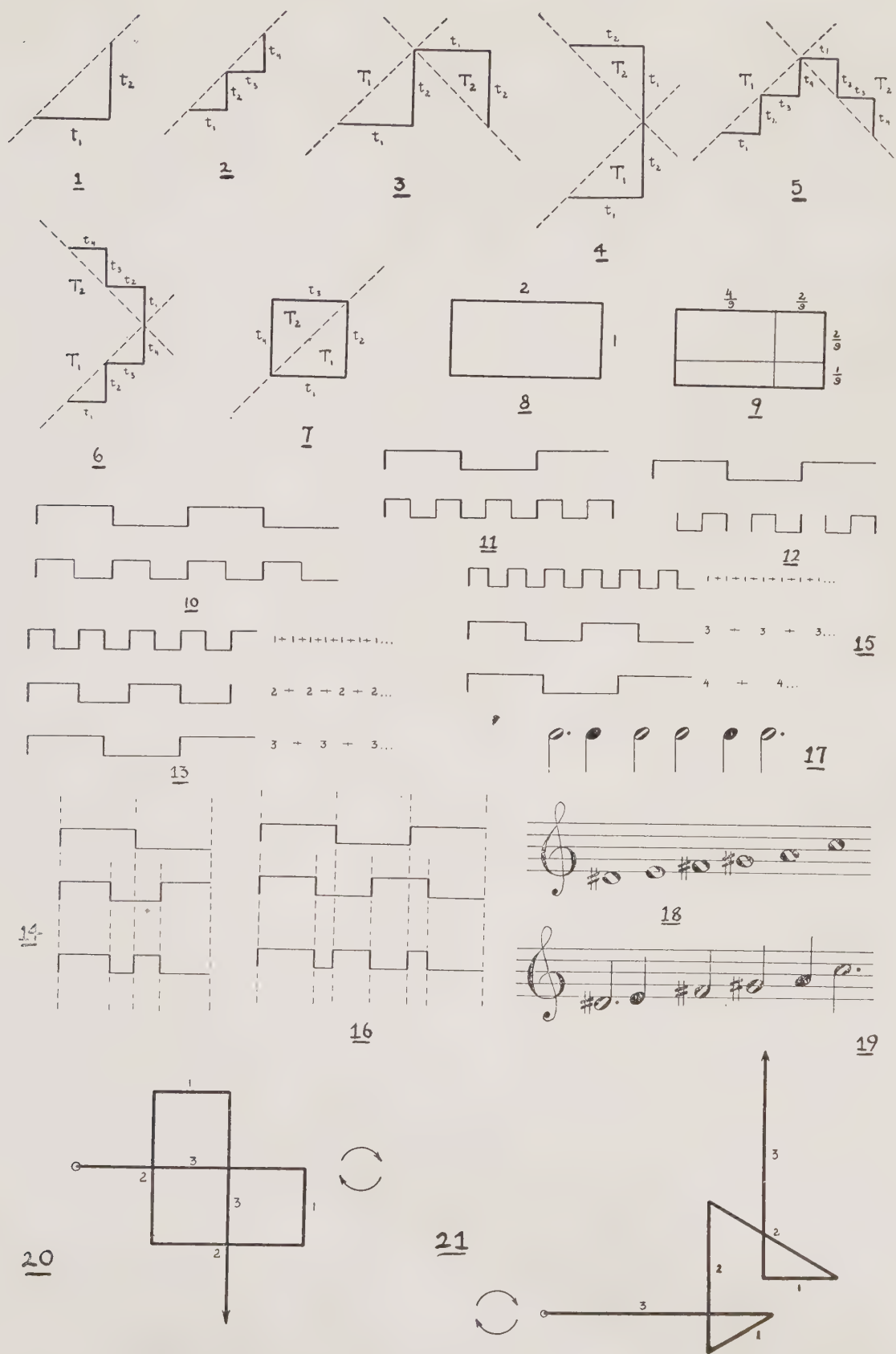
- (2) extension and angle values under the same conditions:

(Fig. 21)

These examples of time, pitch, and line governed by a single rhythmic scheme, which may be stated as:

$Csf = StpF_1t$, where C—continuum, S—sound, F—spatial form, t—time, p—pitch, indicate that all are materials may be united by a universal law of synchronization.

Diagrams Illustrating "A Theory of Synchronization"



"BEFORE AND AFTER"... A "Short"

PANSHOT of a series of authentic World War posters with inscriptions: "Fight for Democracy," "Help the Boys Over There," "Liberty Forever," etc., etc. Finally the camera's eye focuses on a poster with a "four minute" speaker on a rostrum pointing a dramatic index finger at the audience. The speaker is slender, handsome, obviously idealized. Beneath him is the inscription: "Your Country Needs You!" Behind the rostrum are the folds of a large American flag.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSEUP of another orator in action. The camera only shows the upper part of his body. He is quite fat with a formidable paunch, short, pudgy fingers, and a fine array of double chins. He is immaculately dressed in a frock coat. One finger is extended in the same dramatic manner as in the poster. Behind him is a large American flag, undulating in the breeze. He speaks directly to the audience with the usual oratorical flourish:

(ORATOR)

Your country needs you! Your government has called you to the colors to fight for liberty and democracy, to fight for those glorious principles upon which this great country was founded—the principles of Right and Eternal Justice. You are fighting for your homes and your firesides. You are fighting against tyranny and barbarism for a world of love and goodwill. You are the heroes of today and tomorrow, and your country will never forget you and your sacrifices.

CLOSEUP of the orator's back — his bull neck, baldness. He continues gesticulating and orating. The effect is grotesque. Then closeup of orator's front. He goes on speaking without a pause:

(ORATOR)

You will always remain enshrined in the heart of every true patriot. And when the great day comes and you return victorious, we shall all greet you with hosannahs of joy, and you shall go down the years blessed and venerated for all time. . . . Your country calls. Your country needs you. (Again he points to the audience with one dramatic finger, and then freezes in that attitude.)

CLOSEUP of war poster with the handsome four minute speaker.

Quick pan shot of other posters — in reverse.

CLOSEUP of the orator, motionless. Suddenly a distant bugle call, then sounds of battle: cannon, machine-guns, bursting shrapnel, shouting.

CLOSEUP of the muzzle of a large gun.

CLOSEUP of the gun operator. He pulls lever.

CLOSEUP of the muzzle of the gun discharging explosive.

CLOSEUP of the orator in the same attitude.

The crescendo whistle of approaching shrapnel. A blinding flash, a violent explosion. The frame comprising the orator turns completely round like a pinwheel. The war posters appear, jumbled together. They blot out the orator as they whirl about faster and faster. The sounds of battle continue. Again the noise of approaching shrapnel. Again a blinding flash, an explosion and the whirling posters disappear.

MEDIUM SHOT of clouds of smoke.

LONG SHOT of battle scene. American soldiers going over the top.

MEDIUM SHOT of clouds of smoke.

CLOSEUP of belching gun.

RUNNING SHOT of German soldier advancing across war-scarred fields with fixed bayonet.

RUNNING SHOT of American soldier advancing with fixed bayonet.

CLOSEUP of German soldier and American soldier fighting.

CLOSEUP of dead German.

CLOSEUP of pile of dead American soldiers in front of barbed-wire entanglement.

CLOSEUP of German soldier lying on his face

CLOSEUP of American soldier leaning against the side of the trench, his face fixed in a perpetual grin. Blood trickles from his mouth.

MEDIUM SHOT of the two dead soldiers near each other.

The sounds of battle decrease until they are no longer heard. Then in the darkness a military band plays "The Star Spangled Banner." Then the jubilant shouting of multitudes.

CLOSEUP of the legs of returning American soldiers, marching.

CLOSEUP of the faces of welcoming crowd. Shouting, hysteria; flags, hats, handkerchiefs. The music continues.

LONG SHOT of returning American soldiers and welcoming crowd.

CLOSEUP of marching feet of the soldiers.

CLOSEUP of crowd.

TITLE: "AFTER . . ."

MEDIUM SHOT of sign on a factory gate: "No Help Wanted."

CLOSEUP of ex-soldier reading the sign.

MEDIUM SHOT of a group of unemployed in front of the factory. Some of the men are still wearing part of their khaki uniforms.

LONG SHOT of an endless bread line of jobless men.

CLOSE UP of soup being ladled out in a charity joint. The eagerness of hungry men.

PAN SHOT of street of empty stores with their "For Rent" signs very much in evidence.

MEDIUM SHOT of a deserted factory.

CLOSEUP of an idle lathe. Across the belt and

the machinery a spider has spun a web.

MEDIUM SHOT of crowd of unemployed workers at the water front.

CLOSEUP of a worker looking at his torn shoes.

MEDIUM SHOT of a crippled ex-soldier, in uniform, begging.

LONG SHOT of another bread line on a cold night. Abject misery. The playing of "The Star Spangled Banner" continues through all these sequences.

LONG SHOT of unemployed in a flop house. Row upon row of sleeping men. Poverty, squalor.

LONG SHOT of a military cemetery. Row upon row of white crosses.

CLOSEUP of legless ex-soldier.

CLOSEUP of armless ex-soldier.

CLOSEUP of an ex-soldier with a steel brace attached to the back of his neck.

LONG SHOT of the unemployed riding freight cars.

CLOSEUP of a freight car crowded with "transients."

MEDIUM SHOT of an eviction. Furniture piled upon the pavement. A woman seated in a chair on the pavement. She holds a small child in her lap; two other children are standing next to her. Nearby stands an emaciated man dressed in a ragged shirt and old military trousers.

CLOSEUP of a crying woman.

CLOSEUP of the ex-soldier.

MEDIUM SHOT of a group of unemployed sleeping beneath a bridge or viaduct. They are covered with newspapers.

LONG SHOT of a garbage dump. Men, women and children foraging about for food.

MEDIUM SHOT of garbage dump.

CLOSEUP of a woman stuffing a bit of food into a sack.

CLOSEUP of a child picking up a crust of bread and eating it.

MEDIUM SHOT of the Bonus Army marching on Washington.

LONG SHOT of one of the Bonus Army "camps." ramshackle huts made of odds and ends. Poverty, filth.

CLOSEUP of Bonus Army camp.

LONG SHOT of Bonus Army being driven out of Washington. The burning camps in the background and the dome of the Capitol.

MEDIUM SHOT of a mass demonstration of the

unemployed. The police go into action. Tear gas. Brutality. The scattering crowd.

CLOSEUP of a police truncheon striking a worker's head.

MEDIUM shot of the police in action.

CLOSEUP of a bleeding worker lying unconscious in the gutter.

MEDIUM SHOT of a shack in one of the many "New Deal Cities" in these United States. Appalling poverty. In the doorway of the shack stands an ex-soldier in an old ragged uniform.

FADE OUT:

Fade in on title in large letters: "1 9 3 —?"

PAN SHOT of the same posters as in the first sequence shown in the same order. The camera moves quickly from one poster to another, and then focuses once more on the special poster with the inscription: "Your Country Needs You!" The same handsome poster figure is pointing his finger at the audience.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSEUP of an orator in a front coat. Unlike his fat predecessor in the early sequences, he is tall and thin. But he speaks with the same oratorical intonations and uses the same gestures. In general composition this shot closely resembles the one first shown of the fat orator. The music of "The Star Spangled Banner" is played softly at the beginning of the speech, but presently there is a rather abrupt crescendo until the new orator cannot be heard.

(NEW ORATOR)

(Pointing a finger at the audience)

Your country needs you! Your government has called you to the colors to fight for liberty and democracy, to fight for those glorious principles upon which this great country was founded — the principles of Right and Eternal Justice. You are fighting for your homes and your firesides. You are fighting against tyranny and barbarism for a new world of love and goodwill. You are the heroes of today and tomorrow, and your country will never forget you and your glorious sacrifices. (Crescendo of music. The orator's mouth continues to move, but not a word more of his speech is heard.)

FADE OUT.

NOTE—*The editors of EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA welcome scenarios by film experimenters and professional film workers dealing with the American scene.*

Letter from U. S. S. R.

This letter will reach you late in summer. At the end of the summer we will have in Moscow several new sound films—*Ivan* by Dovzhenko, *Motorship Pjatiljetka* by Pudovkin. I know their scenarios well. They contradict the usual scenario forms. There is no love interest and no narrative construction. The scenarios deal directly with film reality. Try to remember how many pictures you've seen without love or risk. You immediately think of *Turksib* as probably the only one. Moscow critics wrote that *Turksib* doesn't show the real from the reel. It has been called an enthusiastic picture about the first steps of the Five Year Plan but doesn't portray the people as they are. However in *Ivan* and *Motorship Pjatiljetka* this will be more apparent and perhaps decided.

What would this mean for world-cinematography? It would be the beginning of film art. It will prove that the cinema can work not only with emotion but with ideas. Try to imagine what kind of literature it would be if the subject of the usual film drama were printed. It would be vulgar and all the tiresome details which we see on the screen would

be senseless in print. You would have written a story about a story. This is the usual scenario.

Pudovkin and Dovzhenko are attempting new cinema problems. *Ivan* and *Pjatiljetka* are the first real sound films. (*The Road to Life* and *Golden Mountains* were silent at first then reshot.) Soon the film will take its place beside literature and the theatre as an art. It will be an art of condensation. Life will be portrayed better than by the novelist of today or the theatrician.

Pudovkin has recently written an article on his new montage theories. It deals mainly with movements on the screen based on the principle of perception. Pudovkin has developed the idea of perception of vision on the screen and analyzed their psychological causes and results.

Two additional films that will soon come to America are *The Ghost That Never Returns*, directed by A. Room, scenario by Henri Barbusse. It deals with prison life in America. The other film is *Salt of Svanetia* by Kalatozow. It depicts the wildest of Caucasian countries before the revolution.

E. G. LIGHTFOOT

Letter from England

From Barnsley, in the coal mining area of Yorkshire there comes in *Black Diamonds* a real workers-film, produced by the miners themselves under the direction of Miner-Producer Hanmer.

It must not be compared too closely with that great mine film *Kameradschaft*, for *Black Diamonds* has not the finished style of its much talked of predecessor — in fact some of the more sophisticated would be inclined to call it crude.

It shows a miner explaining to a Big Film Magnate what a mass of filmic material there is lying dormant in the coal mining industry. But the B. F. M., true to type is contemptuous of the idea, and turns it down. Then John Morgan the miner, tells him of the dangers and the hazards below the surface, of the miners at work and at play till, by some unprecedented miracle, the B. F.

M. decides to go and see for himself.

In this spirit of unusual enterprise the B. F. M. descends one of the local pits. But Dame Nature has a trick up her sleeve, and stages a real roof-fall. When the B. F. M. is dragged out and taken to hospital he is found to have lost the sight of both eyes, but as the film says "It is only now that he has begun to see".

So now that we know what will open the eyes of the Big Film Magnates, all that remains for us, is to start a few special coal-pit tours and the Cinema will breathe and live.

Black Diamond may be crude, but it succeeds by its very artlessness, for Hanmer and his minor-actors have filmed a true-to-life part of their own lives and sincerity is the keynote of this minor-epic of the Yorkshire coal-mines.

Two still shots from a film directed and photographed by Henwar Rodakiewicz presenting the surface aspects of New England. Pictorially effective, but recorded without social understanding of contemporary New England.

" THE FACE OF NEW ENGLAND "



Upper still—A unified design of light and mass.



Lower still—Would have been better if the camera had been focused about half an inch from the top.





Above: **Ivan** (a sound film)

Left: **Arsenal**

Below: **Soi!**

TILLS FROM THREE DOVZHENKO FILM



DOVZHENKO

Dovzhenko is one of the few great directors of whom the public at large knows very little. Those who have seen his films have come away with a new respect for the cinema. The complexity of Dovzhenko's form and content is as difficult to appreciate at one seeing as hearing Beethoven or reading Dostoevski for the first time. To attempt a comparison between Dovzhenko and the Hollywood director is as far fetched as linking Bach with Irving Berlin.

Dovzhenko has an intense feeling for nature in its profound implications. It has been extremely difficult for him to adapt himself to the new and ever developing conditions of his immediate environs. His films typify this struggle of the individual to orient himself to the greater benefits of a socialized society. Dovzhenko's sincerity is reflected in images of power and sequences of beauty, and offer a glowing tribute to both the society which is moulding him and the artisan resultant from that society.

Until the advent of sound Dovzhenko had made only three films: *Svenigora*, *Arsenal*, and *Soil*. *Svenigora* was a translation of a Ukrainian folk tale. It was disliked and not understood. *Arsenal*, Dovzhenko's second film unreel of Ukraine's struggle for freedom. Few liked it; less understood its strange cinematic construction. Those who did, called it, "extraordinary" and compared its director to Eisenstein. Eisenstein himself said, "Dovzhenko must be watched. He is infinitely more interesting than the film." A professional compliment from one who can afford to be generous.

Soil, Dovzhenko's third film projected the class struggle in a Ukrainian village. The film was a rhapsody of victory for a new society. Dovzhenko "the Ukrainian" was called "a poet, a mystic." The film, it was claimed, was not "direct enough." The better directors admired its new montage structure, while outside the Soviet Union the film was hailed as "a masterpiece."

Unlike other directors, Dovzhenko has never been concerned in his films with problems of the individual, (*Bed and Sofa*, directed by Room) isolated revolutionary experiences, (*Fragments of an Era*, directed by Ermler) or acting, characterization, plot; formulas derived from literature and the theatre, and which permeate the world of cinema. Dovzhenko is the first director to make the spectator an active participant at a film showing. A film by Dovzhenko is an *experience*, not an *escape*. This is quite a revolution in itself when we think that ever since the bourgeoisie developed the principles of motion pictures, the film was always used as a palliative, as "entertainment". The social significance of this in a class society is very apparent.

Dovzhenko understands too well the problem of tension and condensation of subject matter to

sacrifice his material for "effects". His heroes are not "objects individualized", but heroic figures representative of social groups. His types are much deeper than character drawings. In the same way his films have no value as stories, i.e. plot, characterization, and other paraphernalia of climactic development outside their social conflicts. It is this profound Marxian basis that determines Dovzhenko's method, propels his form.

Eisenstein is perhaps the only other director who stands adamant in this "non-individualistic" tendency. Anisimov recently pointed out Eisenstein's failure to overcome his problem of the dialectical approach to the personal. "Objects pour down upon the heads of spectators in enormous quantities, — (Eisenstein's film *Ten Days That Shook The World*) — porcelain, cut-glass, chandeliers, statues, columns, architectural ensemble of the Winter Palace — *all these not conforming to the basic content of the film* are transformed into a *real deluge of objects*. We might say an *objective deluge!* The film which was to have been a history of the October Revolution becomes a horde of dead objects covered with the dust of museums. A curious paradox results: the museum objects are *individualized* and pictured with great exactitude while the movement of the masses appear *drab, deprived of individuality and reduced to mere allegory!* (All italics mine.)

The great concern of Soviet directors has been schematism. Kuleshov, Pudovkin, Trauberg, Ermler, Room, Protazanoff, Barnett, single out incidental episodes, chip their character out of one cast and approach proletarian reality by a narrow schematic picture-continuity. A montage-system based on and developed from the discoveries of the bourgeois artist-director: D. W. Griffith.

Eisenstein is the only other director beside Dovzhenko who has established an entirely new approach to the film process. An approach part and parcel of the rapid growth and fertility of the soviet reality itself.

In all his films Dovzhenko has avoided bourgeois tricks. His, even more than Eisenstein's, is the *vital* imagination. The revolutionary experience is deeply ingrained in him. He never leaves this social approach to the theme. He projects the dialectics of the class struggle without resort to caricature. He never schematizes the social processes nor does he resort to film them into formalized, immobile, circumscribed pictures. The technique of montage never substitutes itself for the thematics of socialistic definitions. Dovzhenko's films are utilitarian and practical; a methodology of struggle and construction, teaching the audience, educating them, organizing them into proper directions and assuming an *active* role in their working-class lives.

HOLLYWOOD NEWSREELS

Periodically the motion picture enterprises find it necessary to conduct a mild offensive against the power of self-constituted censorship; not, however, in the interests of vital truths, but generally because of prurient interference with their pandering to sex-starved movie patrons with lurid sensationalism — sex problems arising out of the contradictory morals of the decaying system.

These hypocritical sorties are conducted by press-agents, who display no vigor worthy of an intelligent revolt, but smugly compliment the industry upon past performance and begin their paper-weight attacks as follows:

"Why should not Americans feel pride in and encourage an industry in which America leads the world and through which it is putting American conceptions of life before the world, not as propaganda [sic!], but with immense beneficial influence upon American prestige and commerce."⁽¹⁾

Thus: "The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld". . . . In spite of wide spread paternal suicide and family homicide because of unemployment, eviction, and destitution! No hint of social decay. No cinema dramatization of the sufferings, thwartings, strivings of the destitute millions.

"Influence upon prestige and commerce". . . . But no public treatment of "sex-hygiene and prevention of venereal disease" or other social problems, lest intelligent understanding abolish the necessity for sex-hypocrisy so popular as a screen theme.

"Putting American conceptions of life before the world". . . . But forbidding portrayal of miscegenation, and ignoring racial discrimination, race riots, wholesale disenfranchisement of negroes, persecution of the foreign born.

In short, the intellectual bankruptcy of Hollywood films is accentuated by the social and economic bankruptcy of capitalist ownership and control, which dare not permit free and penetrating expression of the problems it has created and aggravated, but instead hides behind a hypocritical mask of self-imposed censorship.

Nor is the news-reel an exception. Here we are presented with freaks, frumps and oddities that give the American scene its circus character. Our risibilities are tickled with hog-calling contests, dancing marathons, two-headed calves and other trivia; our "souls" are served with sight and hearing of priests and prelates performing their aboriginal abracadabra; our sentiments appealed to by playful puppies and winsome babies; we are "educated" by means of thoroughly innocuous photography of temples, rites and picturesque happenings throughout the world,

none of which portray the violent upheavals attending world economic collapse with either constructive or even consecutive sense. As to direct propaganda, kindly bankers stammer their love for dumb animals and indirectly inspire youngsters with the philosophy of individual success that is so necessary to sustain hope; but there is no suggestion of the misery caused by their insanely grasping, anti-social manipulations. Much space and speech is devoted to the tariff and tax nostrums of industrial barons, but none to an intelligent summary of the social and economic chaos. Endless footage to Big-Navy — Bigger-Navy debates — but not a single plea for appropriating wealth to adequately house, feed and clothe the vast army of destitute workers.

Every phase of rampant individualism and private accumulation, which has run civilization into a ditch from which only the organized workers can extricate it, is exploited and propagandized in persons of prosy priests, bucolic bankers, political procurers, demagogic dunces, and pathetic princes. Individual power and success, whether in war, sport, crime, politics and exploitation, are presented without analysis of the motive or social effect, but rather with a view to inspiring a similar dog-eat-dog attitude, which is beautifully excused if only the "dough" is accumulated and the triumphant one is good-to-his-dear-old-mother. Thus private property, with its concomitants of ruthless greed and exploitation, is dignified — and supplemented with gross sentimentality.

"Czar" Hays makes sure that no idea subversive of anointed privilege reaches the workers through the films and stirs them to lively social consciousness. He maintains specific contacts in Washington for the news-reel companies, suggesting avenues for and limitations to exploitation of news events. Hence the ever-present excitement of military, naval and air-force grandeur and preparedness, stirring patriotic fervor and unthinking emotion, and adding to prejudices and hatreds already effectively sown by other propaganda agencies. But . . . the educational value of picturing bread-lines and masses of unemployed, together with enlightening comment emphasizing that this starvation takes place in the midst of plenty, is strictly barred.

On the few occasions when mass demonstrations are photographed, their grim sense is apt to be perverted by the banal humor of an announcer. However, sometimes such scenes creep in by accident, as during the recent visit of Mayor Walker to San Francisco, when as background to this sycophant could be seen militant paraders with banners demanding adequate governmental relief for the unemployed, demanding the release of Mooney and Billings, and protesting against any attempt to invade Soviet Russia or in any way interfere with its process of

⁽¹⁾ *A Summary of Arguments Against Censorship*, FILM DAILY YEAR BOOK, 1931 — p. 671.

socialist construction. On the other hand, a news-reel that recently deigned to show pictures of the Moscow celebrations of the Fourteenth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution carefully isolated shots of tanks and soldiers marching with fixed bayonets; the obvious intention being to arouse hatred of any nation that displays the efficiency of West Point — in this case to add the Red Menace to the Yellow Peril. In such manner confusion is spread amongst the workers. "The camera cannot lie!" — What cynical farceur first uttered that unqualified phrase! The purveyors of news-reel rubbish, like their brethren of the subsidized press, know the values of evasion and omission, has to separate or conjoin items to achieve implicit lies.

Even if there were not a deliberate campaign of misrepresentation, a further capitalist safeguard exists in the carefully nurtured reactionary mentality of motion-picture editors, or subservience imposed on them by economic necessity (and this is true of the entire industry, wherein numerous able creative artists permit themselves to be mentally throttled in return for the weekly stipend).

Finally comes the censorship, official in some instances, and unofficial in the case of the National Board of Review, which has, through its representation of chambers of commerce, women's clubs, and reactionaries of all kinds, far-reaching influence on bookings by theater owners whenever occasion demands.

A commentator on news-reel censorship declares:

"Scenes of strike riots were ordered eliminated from news reels in one state at the time its newspapers were using photographs of the exact incidents recorded in the films. Another board, upset by the appearance in a picture of an employer who did not use safety devices to protect his employees, ordered insertion of a title reading: 'Henry Jones, a type of employer now happily extinct, who does not believe in safety devices.'"(2)

And further:

"... The most telling count against the censors is that they have deliberately suppressed news or altered its import by cutting out proportions. In one instance, the statement of a Presidential candidate was cut; in another, sections of a news picture which showed banners inscribed with sentiments adverse to another Presidential candidate were deleted. But the most notorious instance is perhaps the cutting out by the Pennsylvania censors of pictures and captions dealing with the coal strike."(3)

Thus evasion of certain subjects would seem to be justified by external pressure and public demand. This is a half-truth — a typical capitalistic contradiction. Evidence: It is precisely the current or capitalistic system of education and propaganda (in which films as a whole join the radio, the press, the school, the pulpit) that perpetuates superstition and bigotry, race-hatred and sectional bias, as a matter of self-protection and on the basis of "divide and

conquer." Trace the ownership and control of the motion picture industry to its source, and one finds . . . bankers, industrialists, property owners, coupon-clippers. And what should their mission be, but to protect their own interests? — to convert a cultural, educational medium into serving those interests! Therefore news-reel content becomes an insipid rehash, carefully loaded with capitalist propaganda. Particularly so, now that the deepening crisis focuses attention sharply upon evidence of the failure of the capitalist system to provide even a modicum of security for millions of workers. The stringent need of these asses for clarity in their intense struggle of class against class finds no response, but rather deliberate confusion, in the world of moving images supposedly reflecting the dramatic happenings of life. This signifies the cultural bankruptcy of the Hollywood outlook, which resorts to cowardly apologetics on the basis of a supposed "mass content" that was long ago shattered by the impact of destitution.

Can the rising demand for truth and understanding on the part of the workers be met by news-reels? Yes, but not by Hollywood's vendors of lies and drugs. They have the technique but not the freedom to use a simple effect — sound over image — to accomplish a dialectic result. For example:

(1) *During the speech of the President on the necessity for "preserving the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home" . . . we cut in shots: of unemployed workers and their families being evicted . . . pauper suicides lying in morgues . . . a homeless veteran picking over garbage . . . then back to the sonorous phrases of stupidity and reaction in the face of social decay.*

(2) *During the speech of a militarist spreading war propaganda and advocating bigger and better and more destructive war machines . . . we cut in library shots: of putrid corpses strewn like garbage on a battlefield . . . millions of wooden crosses in the various national cemeteries of the war dead . . . maimed and tubercular and shell-shocked survivors of the war — the living dead! . . . the gas and bayonet attack on the Bonus Army at Anacostia — new cannon fodder being used against the old and outworn . . . then back to the war-monger, whose kind are preparing more terror and destruction for the world's workers.*

(3) *During a demagogue's speech begging faith in banking institutions and urging the destitute workers to "stop boarding" . . . we portray victims at one of the many bankrupt financial institutions, showing fabulous resources "gilded" on plate glass windows . . . well-known bankers at play, yachting, departing for Europe and testifying at Washington with brazen assurance that the bankers must be served first . . . workless workers on the bread lines . . . then back to the lying economist, whose dull phrase suggest the sound of a drone, a parasite.*

(4) *During the vote-catching plea of a politician who invokes the Constitution and declares that prohibition and debt moratorium are the root of all economic and social evil . . . we cut in shots of destitute workers in all countries under capitalist*

(2) "Censorship of the Theater and Motion Pictures," Beman; p. 199.

(3) Ibid. p. 213.

rule, irrespective of prohibition or national debts . . . a quotation from the constitution: "All men are created equal" . . . followed by shots of negroes being beaten and shot by hired thugs . . . a negro strung to a tree, naked and sexually mutilated, with embers of a fire beneath him . . . police slugging unemployed workers whose banners demand government aid . . . another title: "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." . . . *then back to the mental flag-waving of the candidate for office in the service of the capitalist class.*

It is not for lack of stirring material that the news-reel suffers. There is vitality enough in mass struggles being waged constantly in farm and in-

dustrial areas; drama enough in bank-runs and evictions, horror enough in the morgues, prisons, Hoovervilles and jungles. It is left, however, to the numerous workers' film and photo leagues to photograph the real essence of the crisis; to struggle on with inadequate equipment, in spite of confiscation of their cameras and film, in spite of police terror.

Hollywood news-reels seek innocuous subjects. Only in direct propaganda do they display vitality — for war preparations, to exalt the exploiters, to spread lies. They are a definite source of menace, under capitalist control, to the further cultural progress of humanity.

THIS QUARTER

L. J.

WILD BOYS OF THE ROAD: A photostat of *Road to Life*. It needed a Stroheim with a Marxian approach.

MORNING GLORY: Neither flicker, movie, nor cinema, Katherine Hepburn in a pre-Raphaelite cameo.

POWER AND GLORY: Carefully photographed rehash of nickelodeon 24 sheet. Called *Narratage* but remember Barnum.

I LOVED THAT WOMAN: But this reviewer didn't. Attempts by art director Menzies to inject "Montage" in a flicker for sophisticates. Chaotic and foolish.

PAROLE GIRL: A subtle education in revenge. A pulp, devastating to children and exposing the rotteness in a class society.

SONG OF SONGS: A Shakespearian stock company dressed in their Sunday best for graduation pictures. An album, Deitrich, Mamoulian and a statue in the nude.

TUGBOAT ANNIE. Mervyn Le Roy reveals his scrap-book of tintypes. Beery, Dressler and a tugboat as three musketeers of bathos.

HELL BELOW: A dangerous advertisement for the unsuspecting. It sells the "glory" of Capitalist war and preaches the "honor" in store for patriotic fodder.

THIS DAY AND AGE: De Mille unfurls the banner for Fascism. He had one eye on the German film *M* and the other on tabloid headlines. Why did he give up his bathtub studies?

WORKINGMAN: A capitalist made human; a phenomenon only possible in the movies. Insidious and treacherous especially because of Arliss' performance.

MAMA LOVES PAPA: The bourgeoisie attempts to laugh at itself. Funny-paper Mr. and Mrs. Superficial, except for a moment when city corruption is disclosed.

STRANGER'S RETURN: Is this America's "white hope" director? Hasn't Vidor heard of the two million starving, striking farmers? Has he ever *seen* a farmer? Lionel Barrymore sulks. Miriam Hopkins squints. Vidor struts his incompetence.

42nd ST., GOLD DIGGERS, MOONLIGHT AND PRETZELS, FOOTLIGHT PARADE:

Unimaginative choreographically, stilted musically, a rummage sale of shot and sound. If the instruments of cinema can be used imaginatively at all, certainly in musical comedies and revues there is a golden opportunity. Are all producers and directors nearsighted?

HENRY THE EIGHTH: At last an English film that is competently photographed. Laughton dresses like Jannings and belches. And on the screen a belch suddenly becomes funny. (So the bourgeoisie think).

LITTLE GIANT: A one time *Little Caesar* sans uniform, sans sense.

PATRIOTS: A lesson in technique for directors. A fine expose of bigotry and jingoism.

BOWERY: Unseen are the hungry derelicts in this section, wandering workers, homeless, products of a ruthless capitalism. We are shown beer barons and gangsters enjoying privileges with women and politicians. Hollywood knows what it is doing when it attempts to keep reality from the masses and gives them instead "entertainment"—by—escape to the past.

Moscow Overtakes And Surpasses

I.

The history of film inevitably reflects the course of economic history. Before the crisis overtook the world (excepting only the USSR), most of the successful artistic brains were bought by Hollywood, but not all. Outstanding are those of Reinhardt and Eisenstein who went but did not succumb to cheap commercialism.

Now the cadre has changed with the economic movement. Eisenstein who has just returned from Mexico finds Moscow crowded with old acquaintances: Erwin Piscator, Hans Richter, Karl Junghans, Hans Eisler, Bela Belaz, and Joris Ivens. Men who have come to the Soviet Union for the opposite reason to that of those who go to Hollywood (in fact they would not be considered "successful" in their own countries) are here to express an idea and a purpose in film art practically impossible in any other country.

Here is Piscator, who has so often come under the censor's repression in Berlin, in Odessa has made a sound-film of *The Revolt of the Fishermen* from the book of Anna Segars. . . . Hans Richter (who along with Ernest Toller, George Grosz, John Heartfield) has developed from abstract expressionism of form to concrete expression of revolutionary content. He has produced a sound-film *Metal* about the great Berlin metal strike last year. Pearl Attasheva collaborated with him in writing the scenario which is based on the actual documentary material. . . . Karl Junghans, who made a film of proletarian life in Berlin directed *Black and White*, dealing with the great problem of the relationship of negroes and whites in the class struggle in the United States. The whole scenario was based on historical material and shows the contrast of negro life and labour in America and the thriving negro collectives, farms, and colonies in the South of the Soviet Union.

Hans Eisler, Berthold Brecht, and Slatan Dudov came to Moscow with a copy of their collective work, *Kule Vampe*, the first important German proletarian sound-film, which has been suppressed by the Berlin censor. It deals with a group of unemployed workers who through the crisis are forced to the last degree of poverty and live in self-made huts on the edge of the town. There they dig a great grave and put up the epitaph "Here lies buried our last hope of ever getting work". Brecht who wrote the script is the author of the scenario for *The Beggars' Opera* satire brought up-to-date. In Germany he is well known as a revolutionary dramatist and poet. Hans Eisler, composer of revolutionary music and mass songs, wrote the music for *Kule Vampe* including two well-known proletarian songs, "The Song of the Out-of-Work" and "The Peasant's Revolution". Dudov is a young regisseur

who worked in the proletarian theatre with Brecht.

Joris Ivens of Holland, well known as a leading documentalist, maker of *Bridge, Rain, Zuyder Zee*, etc., after making a sound film *Phyllis Radio* was invited by Meschrabpom Studios to make a documentary sound-film of Soviet Youth.

II.

Youth. Red youth. A great seam running through all the strata of activity in this huge continent of nations. From European Russia to Oriental Asia, from Arctic Siberia to Tropic Tadjeistan. All part of the plan. The Five Year Plan in Four, of Socialist Reconstruction.

Such material, such themes, such inspiration has never before in history been offered to art, to artists. And here we are in Moscow with the job of taking some of this dynamic stuff and weaving it into a work of art. There's so much of it. Colossal. We discussed the question with the leading youth organisations, read all the literature we could, talked to the men who had been there, saw the pictures that had been painted and the films that had been shot. Then we made a plan. We would choose the two great fronts of the Plan: metal and coal. Here was a great youth organisation, mighty construction and production, a vortex of old and new, East and West, peasant and worker . . . building the Plan.

On the map two names stand out in great red letters: *Magnitogorsk, Kuzbass*. Magnitogorsk, on the borders of the Urals, Kazakstan, and Central Siberia. Here, by mountains of iron-ore is being built the greatest metallurgical plant in the world, unique in the socialist sense of being a complete co-operative combine from blasting the ore to making products from steel. The one important raw material not found on the spot is coal, and that is supplied from Kuzbass. Here in Western Siberia are the greatest coal fields in the world.

These were to be our objects together with Moscow as the centre!

It took us four days to get to Magnitogorsk. At first glimpse it's like the Wild West of our early film days, with buggies and horse-riders, rough roads, a shack for a station, barracks to live in, and a wooden store main street. But you haven't got far on the rough ride up the hill when the mighty panorama of construction is revealed. Colossal iron edifices, strange looking pipe lines of enormous diameter, rows of huge chimney stacks, a maze of railway lines, countless buildings, wood, brick, iron, concrete, masses of workers, and through it all a deep vibrating hum of sound, which on coming nearer grows to a roar of noise. Metal-flow, steam valves, compressed air blasts, pneumatic hammers, electric welders, cranes, winches, excavators, trains, conveyors, working full speed, night and day . . . and two years ago this was a deserted steppe!

Here all-singing, all-talking, was a giant of the Five Year Plan. And out of this apparent chaos of sight and sound we made a composition, with the *leit motif* of Youth. For practically half of the people working here are young. Of all nationalities, Russian, Ukraine, Bashkir, Tartar, Khirghiz, Siberian, etc. Here under the leadership of the Communist Party is seen the emergence from the old national separateness and backwardness into working-class unity. The peasant masters technique. And in thus changing nature, man changes human nature.

A part of our picture shows the construction of the second blast-furnace proudly called "Komsomolskaya", because the Young Communist League took charge of its building from beginning to end.

Youth under 25 years of age constructs the largest blast furnace in the world with productive capacity of over one thousand tons of pig-iron a day.

And that is not all. Now there has been organized a Komsomol shift, in which the whole process from blasting the ore on Magnet Mountain, crushing, sorting, transporting, loading, burning with coke and coal, water and electricity.

And with the growth of the blast-furnace is seen the development of a peasant led from a collective farm: becoming literate, working as an unskilled laborer, being drawn into the social life by the Komsomols, and doing his social work (as every citizen of the Soviet is taught and expected to do), as a member of the Trade Union which helps in administering the works, as a student, as a worker in a riveting brigade — a shock-brigadier. We are recording the great production noises and sounds, the blasting and hammering, the clanging and ringing, and the myriad echos of construction. We are recording speech and song — old and modern, national and revolutionary; the songs of the Tartars which perhaps were sung thousands of years ago

when Tartary was an empire; the youthful militant songs of Tartar Komsomols; the old national instruments of the dark Khirghiz. . . . These woven together with the special music and songs Hans Eisler composed for the film.

After three months of strenuous shooting in Magnitogorsk, particularly difficult because of the delicacy of the semi-portable sound-film-apparatus, and the roughness of the roads, and tempo of construction, we are in Western Siberia, in the mining district of Kuzbass. Here is sharply seen the contrast between old and new, a tiny earth-house on the dirty hill-side and the new, clean-looking standard houses on the green hill-tops; the little wooden church and the great new workers' club now being built. Black wooden mine-heads and the white modern architecture of the hospital. The Komsomol organisation in the mining village of Prokopyevsk is very young. A year ago it had 15 members and now there are 4,400. They are helping to develop the second largest coal mine in the world.

Our film had the honor of being chosen as one of the four jubilee pictures from Meshrabbpom studios for the official celebration of the 15th anniversary of the October Revolution and the last year of the Plan. This meant that *Komsomol* (as our film is preliminarily called) is in socialist competition with Pudovkin's *SS. Pyatiletka*; Barnet's *Outskirts*; and *Betrayer of the Fatherland* by Rector Mutanow. All these films were produced by Meshrabbpom and are sound films with international themes.

Pudovkin is now working again with his old camera-man, Golovnya, with whom he made his greatest films, one of which, *The End of St. Petersburg*, was a celebration film for the 10th year jubilee together with Eisenstein's *October*. These were expressive of the period of revolution. It will be interesting to see the new kind which must come out of the period of reconstruction.

"R-E-L-I-E-F"

"One of the relief bureaus gave a family a food order containing, among other things, a chicken. That night the investigator visited a local movie and to his surprise saw the recipient of the food order seated ahead of him with his family. Upon investigation, it was disclosed that the afore-said family had traded in the chicken for a cheaper cut of meat and with the balance added to what they had had celebrated by seeing a cinema.

"Here is tragedy to me. The bureau decided that such a family was not worthy and took their order away from them. What stupidity! If you but sense the desperate need for release behind this picture you can see my point."

—Robert Hartley in *New York Times*.

The Kingdom of Cinema

... What is a good film? A theatre-manager recently stated, "A good film is a film that makes money": the condemnation of the present day cinema is contained in that answer. With the exception of a few visionaries all those who live on the cinema think as this theatre-manager. Money-making is not an enterprise in which one can be choosy about the means he employs: all means are admissible for those who seek commercial success, even if that success is to come through the mistreatment of the public.

But, it will be asked, cannot this public exercise its controlling rights? Will it cheerfully accept the merchandise that is foisted on it? If so, everybody is happy, all discussion is futile.

Not yet. Cinema action is not theatre action, and the State pointed out this difference by establishing a film censorship that it does not yet dare apply to the stage. To justify this arbitrary measure, the State mentions the vast influence of the cinema on the broadest masses. But if the cinema so powerfully influences its millions of spectators, can we accept that this power be given into the hands of a few financial groups who thus have the right to stupefy the public mind if their monetary profits justify their doing so? The public is a child, always ready to accept that which entertains him: at times an excellent achievement at others an assinnity. Since nothing has ever been done to awaken and develop the critical sense of this great docile mass, how can it be expected to defend itself against the degenerating enjoyment meted out to it by so many factory-manufactured productions that follow the basest of patterns? When we hear it said: "What else do you want us to do? We give the public what they want. . . .", we feel that this excuse condemns the part played by those very people who hide behind it. We do not seek the reign of a moralizing or intellectual cinema, but we do demand that the cinema be worthy of the responsibilities incurred by its great power. Why is there not a censorship against stupidity, just as there are defensive measures against the sale of absinthe and narcotics? Does the mind of a people have less importance than the health of its body? That is not what our political harangues full of innocuous idealism teach us.

The question that comes up here does not concern only the cinema. Radio, television, and all new forms of expression that technique may give us, will find themselves facing the same problems. Will these enormous forces be left at the disposal of whosoever has enough capital to grab them up? The freedom given in such instances to private initiative is a caricature of freedom: it results in imposing the dictatorship of a few restricted financial or industrial groups over a domain which is not solely material. Possibly the economic and political system

which rules us at present does not permit envisaging any other solutions: in that case, it means that the system no longer corresponds to the needs of our time and will have to be changed. Outside of Soviet production, the organization and goals of which are not the same as in capitalistic countries, it can be said that the entire cinema is paralyzed by the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a few large firms.

In the name of financial principles and for fear of taking a loss in capital, the businessmen at the cinema's helm are turning down the enormous wealth which they could gain from utilizing youthful intelligences if they only extended their confidence to them. We care little, no doubt, whether or not the industrialists overlook a chance of making further profits, but, since these profits are the only reason for their interest in the industry, this neglect appears to us as the sign of a very pronounced incompetence. They should not, after all, forget that it was through new methods, brought in by new men — Mack Sennett, Ince, Griffith, Chaplin and a few others, — that the American cinema, between 1913 and 1917, succeeded in gaining over the entire world market the supremacy it was so long to maintain.

Today, the system installed by the business men and their orderlies has made it just about impossible for any genius or budding talent to come to the fore. The system represents the most perfect organization of defense against all unknown forces which might revive the declining cinema.

Can the present regime be modified? Is there any hope of seeing the cinema regain its youthful inspiration, the fertile genius which fired its heroic age? This is not impossible. The world crisis is bearing down hard on the great concerns. Perhaps tomorrow they will no longer have credit sufficient to permit exercising their monopoly on a product which demands such vast investments. If so, standardized production, divided up between a few trusts, will have to give way to the independent enterprise of numerous groups. Even today, co-operative production has seen the light in several countries. With this method, the film is produced by the combined efforts of the artisans whose different talents are useful to the collaboration; in these undertakings, the supervisors and other headmen of the industrial cinema no longer have the right to exercise their tyrannical say. These films can therefore be conceived and executed with more freedom than those produced under the blind discipline of the great companies. All these new films will not be good films, it is obvious; no system can by itself create talent. But men of talent will, through this means, find a chance to show themselves, and to show to the cinema itself achievements worthy of it and of its vast audience.

15 YEARS OF SOVIET CINEMA

Fifteen years ago, *Kino-Gazetta*, the organ of the Russian motion picture industrialists protested editorially "against the grave consequences that will result from the government's seizure of the cinema. Cinema art will be killed, barter and speculation will replace pure art."

These producer-owners were not alone in their gloom. Many directors and actors, too, saw no perspectives for the cinema.

That was fifteen years ago.

Last October, Edmund Epardo writing in the French magazine *Cinema* said, "Moscow with its fervent belief, with its incomparable humanism, with its pride in its creations . . . broke the old decalogue and replaced it with commandments more befitting this newly born giant. . . . In sharp contrast to our disillusionment and satiety the Soviet cinema brings an atmosphere of rough frankness and untamable will power."

"Above all the Soviet cinema gives us the taste of thought, poetry and symbol that we have almost forgotten."

During these fifteen years Soviet cinematography has not always been victorious. It has been a road of defeats too, of painful searches and reflections, of unsuccessful experiments.

To trace this road, record the principal changes, schools and directions in the last fifteen years of Soviet cinematography, is the task we have set ourselves in this survey.

The films exhibited in the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1925 fall into three classifications; there were the motion pictures released before the nationalization of the cinema, these released after the nationalization, and foreign films — mostly American and German.

This group of foreign films must be considered separately. The best of them, the work of such film masters as Griffith, Lubitsch, and Chaplin exerted a great influence upon the further development of the Soviet Cinema.

The pre-nationalized Russian film was no more than a poor imitation of the Italian and French cinema. Its actors were the "Russian" exotics that can still be seen, living their "exotic" life in the cellars of the "Russian Restaurants" of New York, Paris and Berlin. In their products handsome men and women, as sleek as thoroughbred horses, loved and suffered while glycerine tears flowed down their faces and the coals in the fireplaces burned low. There was not a trace of thought or of psychoanalysis in these pictures.

The Soviet films of that period were just as helpless artistically though their theme was different. The theme alone was not enough. Ideologically these pictures were barren.

The theme and ideology of the foreign films were

integrated and these pictures could be viewed with interest. It was evident to the most inexperienced and unpretentious spectator that the motion picture of the past had to be buried; the spectator demanded from the cinema an answer to the questions put to him by life. He demanded that the cinema reflect the life surrounding him. It would be wrong, of course, to hold this true for all movie-goers at that time. There were many who still demanded glycerine tears; they had been brought up with them, they shed tears, really, for the yesterday lost to them and past. Naturally, they preferred those of the Soviet films which resembled or were identical to the old pictures. And the box office reflected this.

The technical helplessness of the first Soviet films was shocking. We studied the imported foreign pictures, (Griffith, De Mille, and others). Studying, we must point out, did not simply mean replanting uncritically.

The tremendous events of the October revolution were by no means over. They had loosed new consequences which would follow one upon the other. The brilliant glycerine heroes, so well liked in the past, did not correspond with the new hero who had gone through the tough school of war, hunger, epidemic and revolution.

The glowing coals on the hearth were too harsh a contrast to the war time campfires, to the villages during the civil war, to the fires in blast furnaces and factory that had to be fanned into a roaring flame.

The falseness of the old film was glaringly obvious. It was necessary to change the heroes and the locale. This meant a change in theme, a change in perspective; the entire artistic-creative base had to re-orient itself.

In 1924 Sergei Eisenstein succeeded in doing this in his picture "*Strike*". This does not mean that before that time no one had been preoccupied with these problems. It means only that he succeeded in correctly formulating that which was still obscure and uncrystallized in other minds.

What had he done? He had replaced the old individual hero by a new one — the mass.

This was inevitable. *Strike* was not merely a picture. It was a philosophic reply to those who held that the individual played an exceptional role in history. In this film the individual roles were subordinated. The living mass, acting in the tempo and scenes characteristic to Eisenstein, let the audience perceive its own power. It allowed them to participate in the action unrolling before them, — not as separate individuals, but as individuals powerful because of their relationship to the thousands thousand-like individuals. It was a poem of the masses. Through it the audience could sense the power of the class, could personally resent its con-

... HOLLYWOOD LOOKS AT THE U.S.A.



(Upper left)—**AMERICAN MADNESS** (Columbia): Soft-soap for bank depositors.

(Upper Right)—**WILD BOYS OF THE ROAD** (Warner Bros.): Three hundred thousand homeless boys in the U. S. A., chased from town to town.

(Center)—**WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND** (MGM): Baloney for Bonus-Marchers.

(Bottom)—**I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG** (Warner Bros.): Southern hospitality for the unemployed.





A still of Paul Robeson
by Jack Shain. Dudley
Murphy, who worked
with Fernand Léger on
Ballet Mécanique, did
a mediocre job directing
Emperor Jones in which
this still is taken.



A still by LeRoy Robbins
for **Black Dawn** by Josef
Bajda, a new director.
Continuing his new film
was written by Seymour
Stern.

quest. It answered the question, too, whom and what does art serve?

That which had remained incomplete in *Strike*, Eisenstein completed in his next picture, *The Armoured Cruiser Potemkin*. A new road had been found, new possibilities and new horizons loomed up — but a new individual hero, reflecting the new values still to be created. The mass hero helped perceive the class, it expressed the new values. But that was not enough. It was abstract. At this time Pudovkin released *The End of St. Petersburg*. Later, we had Ermmler's *A Fragment of an Empire*, Pudovkin's *Mother*, Trauberg and Kosintzev's *New Babylon*.

These directors used Eisenstein's method in showing the mass, but, beyond Eisenstein, they attempted to recreate the individual in his complex and diverse form.

Still among these pictures, among all the films of that period, there was not one great film that dealt with current problems of life. There were some such films but they were mediocre, or they possessed no plot or story. For example *The Sixth Part of the World*, by Dziga Vertoff who headed the cinema school "Kinoki".

The attention of the directors was fixed upon the recent past, the turmoil and grandeur of the revolution and civil war. The directors were in yesterday's grip and they found it hard to tear themselves away. In literature mature work had already appeared that dealt with current life. The drama had produced so great a play as Afinogenov's *Queer*. Only cinema still lagged behind life.

Various attempts by cinematographers to depict these turbulent days showed that life had become so complex, that their knowledge was insufficient. They failed to understand the new man, failed to understand the new processes unfolding before their eyes, failed to disclose correctly and profoundly the significance of various phenomena. Because of this the directors substituted human schemes for real live people, the generalization took the place of the complex man, the naive poster figure and effigy alone were projected on screen.

This was a period of painful searches, of artistic failures; it required a complete reconsideration of *the Weltanschauung*. They had to shed their accustomed views, discard those elements incorrectly perceived. They had to catch up with the life that was fast leaving them behind. Naturally, this process had to be painful.

Many cinematographers tried to overlook the maturing artistic tastes and demands of the spectator. Not knowing how to give a genuine artistic reply, the directors presented, instead, barren lifeless formulas and symbols.

The tendency at the time, was to put into one picture the many complex facets of life. This tendency was foredoomed to failure. The directors were afraid they might leave out or forget a detail, therefore they left out what mattered. One could not see the forest because of the trees.

Motion pictures became boring. On all sides one heard of a crisis in Soviet cinematography, of searches that led into a blind alley.

In 1929-30 the first experiments with sound pictures began. The problems that faced the Soviet studios became even more complex. On the one hand, it was necessary to create again a particularized human being, to penetrate beyond the generalization, beyond the schematic delineation of character; on the other to acquire the elements of a new technique.

The Soviet cinema had neither knowledge nor experience. It was necessary in the shortest possible time to bridge the gap between sound technique in the United States and the U.S.S.R.

The problem the directors set for themselves was the creation of a sound organically wed to the cinema, integrated to the action and not merely a sound accompaniment. Besides, it was necessary to create a sound technique that would make the Soviet studios independent of the foreign technical firms and their copyrights.

The problem of technique was solved by the engineers Shorin and Tager who created a motion picture sound system. After a series of experiments the cameras were fit for exploitation and every five or six months, new improved models were issued on the basis of further experimental work in the studios. This problem has been solved. Technically, Soviet sound pictures have caught up with those of Europe, they remain inferior only to the American sound studios.

The appearance of sound in the cinema could only intensify the influence of the theatre on the motion picture. For a time the cinema again was subject to infantile ailments. Theatricalism ran rampant. Lack of experience and the uselessness of the old habit deprived the directors for a time of their routine system of work. Suddenly the pictures slowed down in tempo; they became nothing more than photographed theatre, differing only insofar as they presented many scenes instead of the compact acts of the drama.

The young director, Marcharet, in *Men and Jobs*, one of the most recent of the Soviet talking pictures, has succeeded in solving most of these problems. He has utilized sound as an organic part of his picture; he has left the theatrical far behind and approached very closely to the depiction of the new, particularized, human hero. This new hero is no longer Eisenstein's masses; he is as a matter of course an inseparable part of the masses, a drop in the human ocean, but a drop not of a mechanical, schematic nature. His characters live with all their contradictions; they are no longer naive effigies of virtue or vice. You can have discussions about these characters, you can like or dislike them; involuntarily you are forced to think about these images, to try to plumb them.

Later, *Enthusiasm* appeared. Here, even to a greater extent, maturely at last, and set in a contemporary background, we come upon a refined, particularized and subtle characterization that is far removed from the poster character. Values have been re-evaluated and now we are ready for humanized expression.

Review of Arnheim's "Film"

Were this book to begin with the statement it ends on, — "The future of the film depends on the future of economics and politics, what will happen to the film depends upon what happens to ourselves," — Arnheim might have developed his treatise into a definition of historical importance. As it stands however, the book "Film" is an encyclopedia of film theory. As such, it is a handbook for the layman and beginning film practitioner. For the seasoned film experimenter and theoretician Arnheim's book is merely an excursion into the past. For the student who considers the film as a reflection of a particular society which refers back to the conditions of that society for its (the film's) sources and standards of existence, Arnheim's book has nothing but contempt, as expressed in these words: "It is certainly a mistake to consider that the high quality of Soviet films is attributable to the new material which the revolution opened up to them. On the contrary, it is being proved more and more clearly that the *Soviet doctrinaire insistence upon revolutionary subjects tends to impede the sincerity, the consistency and the vividness of even the best films.*"

Such flimsy statements as: "We are not now considering the cultural or political content but *only the artistic*" — or such malicious distortion of context as "The public became just as weary of barges, of dirty back street dwellings, and wretched pubs as of handsome guardsmen and country mansions; and it learnt *more of real life from a silly American society comedy* than from a dozen proletarian films which with plenty of good will, but without much discrimination *showed life as it is!*" — indicate suffi-

ciently Arnheim's ignorance of reality, and his ivory tower approach to film esthetics.

The contemporary "plastic" criticism of painting, divorced from any social or class forces has been prevalent thruout the bourgeois world. This evasion of the problem and distortion of the facts are of necessity allies to bourgeois society in their class fight. It has been a simple matter for the bourgeoisie to control the art of painting. Artists were encouraged in their individualism so long as it did not rebuke the class that patronized them. Of course sporadic attempts on the part of the more violent ones — Michael Angelo, Goya, Breugel, Daurier and others, could easily be extinguished, since they operated as individuals and not as a class.

With the movie, because of its greater influence and the collective nature of its media, its substantial role in a society is much more apparent. Bourgeois critics can no longer dispose of it with mere "plastic" considerations. Its cultural, intellectual, and emotional progress is inseparable from its class character. And to understand its art one must understand its class. Further, one must understand its role in the class conflict, or having failed to indicate its social roots, one must of necessity fail to interpret its artistic undulations.

To say that Arnheim is a "dispassionate" critic is to say that he is a reactionary one. As economic and social conditions become more acute, as the division of the classes becomes ever sharper, the movie and its criticism comes into the open as a dominant force in the struggle.

* Italics by the reviewer.

FILM by Rudolf Arnheim. Faber and Faber, London, \$6.00

The INTERNATIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEE for EISENSTEIN'S MEXICAN FILM requests your co-operation in the campaign to save the negative of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

- PROTEST AGAINST THE RELEASE OF "THUNDER OVER MEXICO"!
- ORGANIZE LOCAL BOYCOTTS! ● HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS CONDEMNING UPTON SINCLAIR FOR HIS VANDALISM OF EISENSTEIN'S EPIC OF MEXICO!

Write in for literature exposing this crime — the most destructive tragedy in the history of films!

INTERNATIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEE for EISENSTEIN'S MEXICAN FILM
EASTERN HEADQUARTERS: Room 610, 545 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.
WESTERN HEADQUARTERS: 1625 N. Vine Street, Hollywood, California

FORMAL CINEMA

I

It is often remarked that cinema is an art unique. Commonly the reason is found in its technique, involving as it does collaboration to a greater or less extent, as well as a degree of reality which for many people effectually debars cinema from becoming an art at all; occasionally someone sees beneath this the essentially dual role which cinema, far more than literature, must play.

It has always been characteristic — unfortunately, if you wish — of the genius of English-speaking peoples to mingle art with other affairs of life, with the consequence that their only artists of the first rank are poets. It is difficult for us to understand the Latin or the Teutonic ability to make something out of mere patterns in light or sound, and, what is stranger, apply them in the business of life. We incline to the heresy that art is the better for associating with man, improving his daily life, rather than providing on state occasions the opportunity for creating or absorbing particular attempts to reach an absolute Idea. Herein, of course, we are deficient, but we must know this if we are to criticize cinema, for, like the other formal arts, it is based upon a direct impression made on the senses.

On the other hand, cinema is, unlike all other arts, a medium of intelligent communication. To a minor degree in the ordinary newsreel or educational film, eminently in montage, it is a language, an undreamed-of successor to the ancient hieroglyphics. Never before, with perhaps the slight exception of Oriental calligraphy, has there been an art to combine such opposites. It is scarcely surprising that the two rarely receive their due together.

Generally formal cinema has been the one to suffer. With no little show of reason it has been demonstrated that dependence upon the sensory impressions of the film leads to nothing. It has been considered impossible, by artists and laymen alike, to express feelings of a high order in nothing more than a moving photograph. And the futile, if amusing, romps of so many experimenters do much to confirm this opinion. They are seldom prepared to defend their work against criticism, for they have not taken it seriously, and their best efforts exhibit a virtuosity and a lack of conviction that in themselves almost persuade one of the barrenness of this field.

Formal cinema, however, remains. It has had its serious-minded workers, its moments of intuition, and it demands aside from this the utmost attention as a theoretical case. Barring actual achievement, the medium *requires* a sensuous expression. If there were no such expression, we might say, it would be necessary predict one. Whatever the common result, cinema is in its origin a medium of moving light and shade. The reality of most films is impressive, but

it is purely an effect, and its dispensability is clearly evident in the slightest attempt at pictorial impressionism, or symbolism. It is perhaps analogous to the lifelike realism of last century painters and sculptors, or to "tuneful" music, except that its proper basis is more difficult to discern. One can, without advocating the strict "functionalism" of an Eggeling, reasonably ask for some recognition of the two-dimensional, monochrome character of the screen.

In stricter terms, we may define cinema as the observed motion of light and shade on a limited plane surface. It combines primary elements in a wholly new order. It is dangerous, of course, to found aesthetic judgments upon physical data; nevertheless it is possible to say that cinema supplies the one missing order. Of the two higher senses — sight and hearing — the latter is served by music both statically, as in the East, and dynamically, as in our own age, while there has been developed a plethora of arts based on visual form or design. It only remained to discover an art appealing to the eye through motion. — motion, that is, conventionalized in a definite medium.

There are serious objections to the newly-invented cinema as a satisfactory solution of the problem. Indeed there is some reason for supposing the problem insoluble, a purely theoretical union of elements impossible save in a devitalized age of sophistication and mechanical ingenuity. For all that, whatever the validity of a "fourth order", cinema does supply one, and as far as we can tell does so legitimately. It is rigidly restricted, yet it offers almost unbounded possibilities for motion in space and time. Again and again intelligent critics have stressed this point in deploring the customary reliance of commercial and amateur films alike upon well-worn dramatic actions or simple documents. It is for the future to decide, but it seems fair to assume that moving values on the screen can have a quality comparable to that of similar values in the finest musical compositions.

The single fact of their motion definitely removes cinema from competition with the various graphic arts. Few people realize the vast difference caused by the simple incident of motion. The photograph is still to be judged by the canons of painting, composition, light, tonality, and because so much is determined by external conditions, photography can scarcely hope to do better than a romantic impressionism. Let the same photograph be put in motion and it subject to a wholly new set of values. For the line of the artist is substituted the moving light of the artist. It is the distinction between a landscape with clouds, and the actual clouds shifting against the sky. A more pointed illustration is an ordinary fire. Painters, with rare exceptions, have

passed it by for the obvious reason that there is nothing to paint, it is all motion. Yet there must have been some who wished to catch the bright, fluid colors of the flames, whose fascination is the very opposite of that of the pictures we are told to see there. Somewhat as color has come to be used in painting as a functional equivalent for line, so on a larger scale the brush-made line gives way in cinema to the rhythmic ordering of less precise masses of light and shade.

One cannot urge too strongly that this obviates dependence upon structural composition of line and mass. It is too often thought that the rhythmic, dynamic basis of cinema consists in the proper organization of pictorially composed images, each in some sense flowing into the next. Nothing could be more misleading. Such a conception logically forces one to trim the motion to suit the composition, which is nonsense. To maintain a particular composition through a sequence is only to bring the theater onto the screen, whether the actual content be realistic or highly abstract. Naturally, proper composition of the motion will normally guarantee reasonably sound static composition, but it must be clearly understood that this will be due not to the direct application of the principles of graphic art, but to the more general principles of aesthetics inherent in good cinema. Whenever the one is definitely violated, the effect of the other will justify the sacrifice.

II

In cinema there is not the slightest necessity for pictorial completeness. A Turner or a Cezanne as well as a Phidias must present a finished design, for his success depends upon the immediate aspect of his work. The totality of his meaning exists without reference to the element of time. The cinematist, on the contrary, has to project his meaning through a temporal continuity, in which the single image, so far from being important, is fundamentally nonexistent. Although still tied to the physical facts of frame and canvas, he is free from responsibility towards them as graphic materials. Their excuse is that a three-dimensional medium (such as Edison envisaged, for example) is artistically inconceivable. In this respect the stereotyped products of Hollywood are more essentially cinematic than some of the films of the painters of *avant-garde*, though to be sure the former's anartistic theatrical nature more than cancels this advantage. The image that exists only in the mind's eye as an arrested moment in a sequence, or as used as a dimly suggestive still, has not sufficient consequence to demand attention as a subject for spatial design.

Cinema possesses a greater affinity with music. Even here, however, the relation is more useful in philosophical than in technical discussion. Music — Western music, that is — employs likewise temporal continuity, and the two are thus what might be called fourth-dimensional homologues, but they are not so similar in actual detail as to merit the many comparisons made, and the conclusions that have been drawn.

Music is composed of harmonic units, bearing

both in quality and quantity exact mathematical relations to one another. Involuntarily it possesses a beat, which is taken for granted in any musical criticism. In cinema there is neither unit nor beat for it is only a continuous photograph of nature. Of itself, although it exists *in* time, it does not possess the aesthetic quality of time. It is thus futile to compare the basic elements of the two for rhythm or harmony. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that this difference is demonstrated in the formerly universal custom of employing music as an accompaniment to a film. Just because the film itself lacked a definite rhythm, was it possible, and commonly preferable, to add to it a tom-tom, as it were, to mark the tempo. The underlying reason, of course, is that one sense restricts itself to a particular, ordered phase of its field, whereas the other embraces its entire field. One can no more combine pictures of objects in an exact rhythm (excluding as before montage) than one can the objects themselves, although the purest abstractions have some claim to this closer sort of musical analogy.

Nevertheless cinema is not a cognate art for nothing. If it is dissonant by nature, it can be worked into melody by the artist. Upon the material of painting he will impose the temper of music, but with the purpose of painting — to impress upon the physical world an ideal order. Obviously the result will be in large part incommensurable with that of the musician. Their chief similarity is simply their dynamic approach. The aim of both arts is an aesthetic expression in time, and on this level the two can be profitably compared. Cinema, no less than music, may have a fine subtle rhythm, a powerful crescendo, a light-hearted scherzo, or solemn processional. For the harmony of notes and scales it merely substitutes a harmony of nature drawn up in ordered patterns of continuity. This, however, introduces the whole question of the real meaning of formal cinema.

If cinema is an aesthetic expression in time, it is still true that it is also a visual, and so a plastic art. Except in the purest abstract work, it is necessarily concerned, to some degree, with a representation of the physical world. It is, therefore, although closely related to neither the fine arts nor music, a sort of hybrid of the two, and cuts across the established distinction between them. Heretofore there has been either the art of form, expressing directly the beauty of nature, or the art of continuity, expressing in a more abstract fashion the essential rhythm we find in the beauty of nature. Quite naturally architecture, the first of the arts, is called frozen music: music is the final, free form of those principles which begin with the master craftsman and builder. They gradually become clearer and more explicit through the several stages of sculpture (the final form for the Greeks) and painting, but in music their expression changes from the relatively concrete to the relatively pure and abstract. The latter is not necessarily the superior; it does form, however, a distinct and separate order.

Into this tidy classification has come the film. A few hoped at first, through the proper composition of lines and masses, to attain a visual art sim-

ilar in character to music. That the abstract film has not lived up to expectations is a story only too well known. Despite early hopes it seems to have done little more than the efforts of the Cubists and others in painting and sculpture. It may be illogical, but it is a stubborn fact of experience that neither the painter nor the cinemist can seek his Idea beyond the limits of natural material. Consequently the film is thrown back upon this material at the same time that it is demanding a musical freedom for its quality of motion. The result can only be a compromise. Forced to be too realistic both for a purely plastic art and for an abstract art, the film must hope to be able to fill up successfully a measure of half and half.

This necessity would seem to point to a permanent equivalent of the dance and of that harmonious extension of the dance the Greeks called music. The same principle — temporal rhythm of natural material — lies at the base of both, and in itself is an answer to those who do not admit the validity of formal cinema. For always there has been an art of "visual music", perhaps before any other art, only it has perforce been of transient interest; it is but reasonable to assume that the film can represent this art in a permanent and therefore more flexible form. The difference, however, is considerable. No plastic form created on a basis of real life can involve such a conflict of means as does cinema. Its rhythm is a purification rather than a sublimation of the rhythm of nature. Nature necessarily combines the visual with the temporal, the concrete with the abstract, but to turn this into a strictly formal art is another matter altogether. While the conception is simple enough, the execution presents a formidable problem, and it is here that theory breaks down, leaving the critic to be guided by the actual achievement that has gone before.

III

Those films which, irrespective of purpose, may be regarded as wholly or in part formal fall naturally into three groups. At one extreme is the purely absolute film; at the other the sensuous film drama, most notably represented by the school of *Caligari*. The borderline between these two is the province of the film-poem which, if we may be permitted to judge cinema by Aristotelian standards, will be the most satisfactory of the three. Whether this conclusion is allowable or not, the film-poem has much in its favor. I cannot think that the absolute film is much superior to the abstract film. It is subject to the same criticism — that mere functional patterns, just as in painting, cannot of themselves suffice. The eye demands a familiar scene in visual art, and will not recognize the idea of beauty of the artist who does not supply such a scene. No amount of theory can dispel our instinctive conviction that a picture must be a picture of something, a statue of something, and similarly a picture of some action, and not a congeries of idle shapes and objects. Motion for motion's sake is a legitimate rule only if it is a motion familiar to us, and which we expect to see in a continuity of motion. Ar-

bitrary motion may please us for a while, but in the picturing of movement we look for a representation of such movement as we know, the movement of life, and we do not readily respond to artificially propelled heads, coffins, violins, dice, and the like. In short we demand a causality of motion.

On the other hand, the sensuous film drama is too close to reality, and is already chiefly of historical importance. The distinction is not always made, but by this term I understand narrative which replaces the psychological semi-montage of Griffith and Pabst by a sensuous background and atmosphere. *Caligari*, of course, is the prototype (although less typical, and closer to Pabst than is generally imagined), while *Faust* is the culmination. Films of this sort still appear from time to time, but they are obvious throwbacks to the Old German school, poignant reminders of what we have lost. The great value of the school lies in the fact that it was really the final expression of the ancient German culture, of the spirit of the *Nibelungenlied*, Till, Duerer, and Faust. It was impossible for this spirit to see beyond the pictorial qualities of the screen. It did not and could not know the meaning of "cinematic value" as an end in itself. In utilizing the film it only sought to retell old stories and legends in an imaginative medieval setting composed for the purpose. When Murnau, therefore, in *The Last Laugh* handed over, as it were, the leadership of German cinema to Pabst, and revealed in the perfection of *Faust* that the old spirit was dead, there was no one to take up where the Germans had left off. Modern cinemists are at the beginning rather than the end of a tradition, and want either some form of montage, or formal cinema by way of genuine filmic means and not simply a filmic background. The old films can always be inspiring for their static qualities, but as a technical genre they belong to the past.

If I have not been too indefinite there should be a certain amount of room between the two groups I have just mentioned, room for action that is rather a pattern in itself than played within a pattern. Such cinema will avoid the exaggerated purity of the abstractionists and absolutists, as well as the impressionistic counterpoint of the Germans. In it the elements will be controlled and unified to produce an aesthetic whole, which will yet be credible and reasonable. Normally it will depict human beings, for the same reasons that the best painting and sculpture does; normally it will, however, in contradistinction to painting and sculpture, be artificially or formally composed, although some future genius may succeed with sheer naturalism. It will, moreover, have space for abstract or absolute sequences, which may perhaps be compared to figures of speech in literature.

build on practice; it is more important to give experimenters a free hand than to try to lay down for them laws which must inevitably be superseded. It is, however, the critic's privilege to cast ahead and indicate the general scope of a subject, as it seems to him, and I think it is not too much to claim that, of the several divisions of formal cinema, that roughly defined by the term film-poem is the most likely to be the cinema of the future.

Proletarian Cinema in Japan

The proletarian cinema is one of the most backward sections of Japanese proletarian art. It has not yet gone beyond chronicling the worker-peasant movement. The first film portrayed the famous strike on the soy enterprise in Noda (in 1928). Later, pictures were taken of the May 1st celebrations, in 1929, the funeral of workers in Tokio and Kyoto during the same year, the large strike of the Tokio tramcar workers in 1930, Mayday celebrations that same year, etc. All these films carry the title *Chronicle of Proletarian Cinema* (Prokino News). Although technically the films are taken quite well, the mounting and assembling of the films is rather poor.

The Union of Proletarian Cinema of Japan is affiliated to NAPF. It publishes a monthly magazine called *Proletarian Cinema*. The Union has branches in Tokio, Kyoto, Osaka, Yamanashi, Yamagata, etc. Discussions on questions of proletarian cinema and on the film itself, are generally organized at the time of the demonstration of the film.

them and dispersing the audience.

During the first half of the previous year five evenings of proletarian cinema were organized in Tokio, two in Kyoto, while from other cities there are no data as yet. A number of portable cinema-projectors have been obtained for demonstrations of films in villages.

However, the proletarian cinema, which has existed only some two or three years, continues to develop.

The Union of Proletarian Cinema, having carried

out its first plan of movie taking, began last autumn to carry out its second. The money required for the taking of these pictures is obtained by means of voluntary deductions from the meagre wages of the workers and peasants. By September of last year 320 yen had already been collected to the account of the 1,000 yen required.

The peasants greeted the arrival of these portable movie outfits enthusiastically. They themselves went to the police department to obtain a permit for the demonstration of films, and voluntarily stood on guard at the entrance of the hall. In one of the villages, the peasants knowing that the police would not grant a permit posted the following announcement outside the hall: "Here is held an evening of prayer for the deceased Aigawa—non-members of the Peasant Union are not allowed." Instead, three films of the Proletarian Cinema were demonstrated. They were: *Sumigawa* (the name of a river in a workers settlement in Tokio), *Collective cultivation of land in the village Siodome*, and *Children*.

On the initiative and under the guidance of the Union of Proletarian Cinema, a short-term course of proletarian cinema was organized in the beginning of August 1930. Twenty persons from all parts of Japan registered for it. The course, however, had barely started when it was disbanded. Only one lecture on *Cinema and Marxism* and half a lecture on the *Theory and History of the Proletarian Cinema Movement* was delivered to the students. Nevertheless, on the following day the students decided to organize a circle for the study of proletarian cinema.

"QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

Continued from Page 13

Not just one, but many deaths; many skulls, skeletons . . .

What is that?

That is the Carnival pageant.

The most original, traditional pageant, "Calavera," death day.

This is a remarkable Mexican day, when Mexicans recall the past and show their contempt of death.

The film began with the realm of death.

With victory of life over death, over the influences of the past, the film ends.

Life brims from under the cardboard skeletons, life gushes forth, and death retreats, fades away.

A gay little Indian carefully removes his death-mask and smiles a contagious smile—he impersonates the new growing Mexico.

Harry Alan Potamkin

The American revolutionary movement has lost a most skilled and devoted film critic, writer and poet with the death of Harry Alan Potamkin, on Wednesday afternoon, July 19th. Potamkin had been suffering for the past three years from an ulcerated abdomen. On June 25th he had a hemorrhage and was rushed to a hospital. Twenty-six members of the John Reed Club, The Workers Film and Photo League, and the Daily Worker staff, as well as some total strangers volunteered their blood. Only four were qualified and some had to give their blood several times. Walker Evans, well-known American photographer who knew Harry Potamkin only slightly gave his blood in vain just before Potamkin died.

Potamkin was the Executive Secretary of the John Reed Club, a member of the National Committee of The Film and Photo League, frequent contributor to the *New Masses* and the *New Pioneer*, New York correspondent for *Close Up* and had published a series of articles in *Hound and Horn*, on outstanding film directors. The last two in the series dealt with the works of Pudovkin and Eisenstein. Because of his devoted and understanding service to the cause of the working class he received a Red Funeral. This was the first time a non-Communist Party member has been given a Red Funeral.

His acquaintance with the Soviet film was the turning point in his career and led to his entrance

as an active fighter on the cultural front in the revolutionary movement. He was respected for his criticism and interpretation of bourgeois and Soviet films even by writers in the capitalist press. Shelley Hamilton of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, a bourgeois film society wrote of Potamkin, "He had the literary power to express what he knew. Moreover, since with all his artistic gifts and appreciation, he cared more for human beings than he did for art, he stood almost alone among writers in his passionate insistence that the great force of the motion picture should be used in the broadening and strengthening of human understandings and in helping build a civilization in which the lives of men and women and children would be better worth living. As a man and as a writer we can look far and near and see no one to take his place."

Potamkin saw two films before he entered the hospital; the butchered version of Eisenstein's Mexican film of which he said that Eisenstein's name should not be used; that it is a "glorified thriller with a nationalistic ending" and "Patriots." He told me that he considered "Patriots" the most important film to have come from the Soviet Union in a number of years. Amkino has dedicated the film to him. Harry Alan Potamkin is survived by his widow, Elizabeth Potamkin, who has donated his enormous and valuable film library to the film students of the State Institute of Cinema (G. I. K.) Moscow.



Still by Samuel Brody.
Mask by Adolph Wolf.

Experimental Cinema in America

The Film and Foto League has organized groups throughout America making documentaries, working-class news reels, and other films of a social nature. They have produced several shorts, mounted several features and projected Soviet films throughout the states. They conduct a school of the motion picture called, "Harry Alan Potamkin Film School," where technique, production, history and criticism are taught. Classes are two nights a week and some of the instructors are: David Platt, Ralph Steiner, Irving Lerner, Leo Seltzer, Barton Yeager, L. T. Hurwitz, Nathan Adler, Joseph Freeman, Joshua Kunitz, Samuel Brody and Lewis Jacobs.

Ralph Steiner, winner of the Photoplay prize several years ago with his film *H²O*, has shot documentary material on farms and along the waterfront. Two other films: *Gears in Motion and Design*, and *Surf and Seaweed*, were notable because of his feeling for the object. *Cafe Universal* (tentative title) was made with the cooperation of the Group Theatre. It is now being cut and mounted into three reels. It is an anti-war film with stylized acting and a specialized use of dialogue. It will be ready some time this winter.

Jo Berne is an independent director whose *Black Dawn* has been praised by all movie reviewers. It is a story of three people on a farm. It is carefully photographed, moves very slowly and has only the barest amount of dialogue. There is a musical score throughout the four reels by Cameron Macpherson, the producer. Seymour Stern, one of the editors of *Experimental Cinema* wrote the continuity.

Irving Browning is a New York advertising photographer. He has made several advertising films and a documentary of New York called *City of Contrasts*. The film is done entirely in multiple exposures. Stills will be published in the next issue of *Experimental Cinema*.

Henwar Rodakiewicz is now in New Mexico making a film of Indian life. Working with him are Floyd Crosby, cameraman for Marnau's *Tabu*, and Leonie Knoedler, the producer. Rodakiewicz has made *The Barge*, *Portrait of the Artist* and *The Face of New England*, stills of which are reproduced on another page.

Watson and Webber whose film *Fall of the House of Usber*, was made several years ago from Poe's story, have just completed *Lot in Sodom*, a modern treatment of a biblical story

Joseph Schillinger has made several short films to illustrate his principles of rhythm in motion. The reproduction is from his latest film. The drawings for it were made by Mary Ellen Butte and Elias Katz. The camera work and animation by Lewis Jacobs.

Jay Leyda whose *Bronx Morning* is showing in all Film Societies throughout Europe, is now in Moscow studying at the film university there.

Lewis Jacobs has made two shorts, *Mobile Composition* and *Commercial Medley*; also documentaries in Scottsboro, Harlan, Atlanta, and Arkansas. He has mounted several travelogues and industrial films. *As I Walk* is a two reel documentary of a working-class section in New York. Sound is used as monologue. For the past two years Jacobs has been production manager of a motion picture trailer company.

Herman Weinberg is a Baltimore film critic. He is manager of "The Little Theatre" there. He has made two shorts: *City Symphony* and *Autumn Fire*. He is now planning a third.

Note: The Editors of EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA invite film experimenters to write about and send stills from their productions.

STILLS FROM FORTHCOMING FILMS

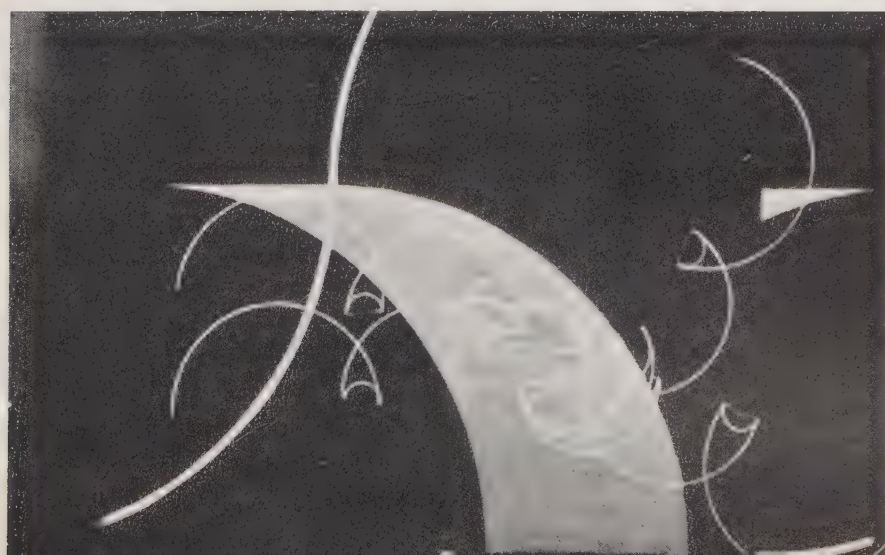
(Right)—**Cafe Universal**: Ralph Steiner.



(Below)—**As I Walk**: Lewis Jacobs



(Below)—**Synchronization**: Joseph Schillinger



Black Dawn: Josef Berne



The Ghost That Never Returns, directed by Alexander Room. From a scenario by Henri Barbusse dealing with American prison life.

SOVIET FILMS NOW IN U. S. A.



From **The Deserter**, Pudovkin's recent sound film.



From **The Island of Doom**, directed by Timoschenko.

The New Deal in Hollywood

The strike which recently "ended" in the motion picture studios of Hollywood was due to the producers' refusal to deal with the sound technicians, although they had agreed to do so in a pact signed with the unions in 1926, intended to settle such situations. These men, who are highly skilled, were working up to twenty hours a day, seven days a week, with no additional pay for overtime, at a rate of from \$25 to \$60 a week, amid high salaries ranging from \$100 to \$5,000 a week. Moreover, they had periods of unemployment between pictures ranging from one to four weeks. The sound men's union finally called a strike. Two days later the other crafts went out in sympathy. The producers set about immediately tying up a group of camera men, the men hardest to replace, with contracts calling for fabulous salaries.

Then the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a union which had an agreement with the striking unions (I. A. T. S. E.) giving the latter exclusive jurisdiction over all electrical workers actually employed in the making of pictures, was called upon to, and obligingly did, supply strike-breakers. The I. B. E. W. then claimed that they had jurisdiction over the sound and electrical workers. The producers agreed and immediately signed a contract with them to supply all their future needs. Another union, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, filled the places of the striking studio grips (stage hands).

The strikers found themselves not only in a battle with their powerful employers but also with two organized unions affiliated with the "great" American Federation of Labor, which were out to gain something for themselves while their fellow-unionists were backed against the wall. The strikers appealed to the United States government to force the producers to arbitrate. Secretary Perkins sent two federal conciliators. The producers refused to see these men and evaded any and all arbitration or mediation. Nevertheless, the conciliators recommended that the strike be ended and the men taken back upon the same terms and without prejudice. Appeals to President Green of the A. F. of L. to do something about an affiliated union's strike-breaking brought only telegrams of condolence which meant nothing. The strikers then appealed to the newly created National Labor Board of the NRA. Dr. Leo Wolman, its acting chairman, asked Governor Rolph to appoint someone to mediate. Timothy Reardon was appointed and his recommendations were the same as those of the federal conciliators. Evidently these recommendations were lost in transit.

The strikers were desperate, as they saw that nothing was being done and that more camera men were being signed by the producers. Judge Ben Lindsey went by plane to Washington. Appeals were sent to *The Nation* and *The New Republic*. William

Evans, chief of the Los Angeles headquarters of the NRA, also went to Washington to demand immediate action. After three days of blah the Labor Board finally reached its decision. The striking workers went mad with joy when Leo Wolman wired:

The National Board announced yesterday afternoon the following decision for the settlement of the motion picture workers' strike in California: (1) That strike be called off at the suggestion of National Labor Board; (2) that employees be taken back without prejudice, strikers to be given preference before new employees are taken on, and that they may retain membership in their organization, it being understood that this involves no change in the industrial relations policy of the motion picture industry; (3) that there be no discrimination against membership in any union; (4) that jurisdiction questions be settled by the A. F. of L.—pending settlement of these jurisdiction disputes no strikers shall be called; that disputes as to the interpretation of this agreement shall be decided by the National Labor Board and both parties agree to accept decision of this board as final and binding. The board is assured that all parties will cooperate in carrying out this agreement.

The next morning the men crowded outside the studio gates. Just about a hundred men, in most cases the highly skilled ones who could not be replaced, were taken back. The rest, close to four thousand, were politely told that the jobs were filled—by union scabs. But in the future, should there be any openings, they would be hired "without prejudice," providing they joined the strike-breaking unions. The strike overnight became a lockout. The men are helpless, as they are bound by the NRA Labor Board decision not to strike again. The leaders wrote the motion picture producers a very polite note reminding them of the NRA decision, but they are still waiting for a reply.

So the "new deal" has come to Hollywood in the form of unemployment to men who have loyally worked in the studios for many years. The men are bitter. Some pace the streets in a daze. Rumblyings are heard about murder, beatings, and sabotage. In one day the homes of two camera men were stoned. Several strike-breakers were beaten. What the men may do does not take much effort to imagine. The producers, though they accepted the decision of the NRA, have politely refused to abide by its ruling. In the meantime, one of the strongest unions in the country is broken in body and spirit; the men are locked out as a result of the treachery of a handful of camera men, the knavery of two unions, the brotherly spirit of the A. F. of L., and the great power and influence of the NRA.

Scotland and Film

Though Edinburgh, the Capital of Scotland, is renowned the world over as an intellectual city, it was not until the formation of the Edinburgh Film Guild some two years ago that it gave any evidence of an intelligent interest in the cinema as an art.

Since its inception, however, the EFG has had a rapidly widening influence, and today numbers amongst its most enthusiastic members the Keeper of the National Galleries and the Professor of Fine Art at the University. The various activities of the Guild have probably filled more columns of the Edinburgh press than any similar organization, and largely as a result of the interest it has aroused, the *Scotsman*, perhaps the most conservative daily paper in the world, has commenced a weekly cinema feature which is a model of its kind, notable for its shrewd judgment and a real understanding of the function of the cinema both as an art and an entertainment.

Founded in 1930 for "the study and advancement of film art, by Norman Wilson, a young man who has neglected most of his other interests to attempt to gain for the cinema the recognition its importance demands, the EFG originally intended to organize and support the first repertory cinema in Scotland. At the last moment, unfortunately, negotiations with the cinema concerned terminated abruptly, and though a makeshift arrangement was entered into with another theatre, the scheme proved a failure. Oil and water will not mix, and a commercial company bent on making the largest possible profits, and a society formed to show "unusual films" — damn the term! — were hardly likely to evolve programmes that would give mutual satisfaction.

After the failure of the repertory venture private Sunday performances were resorted to, and during the season just finished have been received with increasing satisfaction. Fortunately no difficulties have been encountered with the magistrates—possibly because the word "non-political" was judiciously incorporated in the constitution. It has therefore been possible to show such films as *Earth*, *Man With the Movie Camera*, *Mutter Krausen*, *Westfront*, and *Crossways*. More Russian films would probably have been shown had not the Worker's Progressive Film Society been in existence. This society showed practically nothing but Soviet films, but ultimately had to cease operations owing to financial difficulties. It is probable, therefore, that the EFG will show more Russian films in its programmes next season.

Apart from its performances, which take place in a central first-run theatre, the Guild holds regular meetings in its club-room, where there is a library of film books and periodicals. These meetings have been addressed by many notable directors, critics, technicians, and speakers famous in other

spheres of endeavor who have given their views on the cinema.

Norman Wilson has consistently declared that no film society can afford to be merely eclectic; if it is to justify its existence it must do something of practical worth. The Edinburgh Film Guild carries out this dictum, for its activities are many and varied. It organizes matinees of films specially suitable for children; fosters the production of sub-standard films, of which it holds periodical exhibitions in its club-room; and has in hand the production of a documentary film on standard stock depicting the everyday life of Edinburgh and its people. To find a suitable scenario for this film there was arranged a competition, open to all, and judged by John Grierson, who gave the award to a university student and an Edinburgh journalist. Though funds have not yet enabled a start to be made with the production of this film, which is planned for feature length and will be as much a commentary as a documentary, a shorter film of the city now being made will soon be cut.

Early this year the Guild organized an International Exhibition of Film Stills, which was opened by Herbert Read and did much to arouse an interest in the cinema in artistic circles. Among the most outstanding collections in the exhibitions were the contributions from Japan, Czechoslovakia, and Russia—the last having an entire room devoted to its display. The exhibition was also on view in Glasgow and in St. Andrews. Arrangements are being made to hold next season two further exhibitions; one devoted wholly to the Soviet cinema, with a display of stills, posters, and photographs of theatres, studios, etc.; and the other to British films.

Outside of Edinburgh there is the Film Society of Glasgow, which has been in existence for about three years and has shown many famous films, including *Potemkin*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Storm Over Asia*, *Drifters*, *Finis Terrae* and *Theresa Raquin*. The Glasgow Society's activities mainly consist of exhibiting such worthwhile films, but I understand it intends to open a clubroom and to arrange lectures and demonstrations in the future, and is at present organizing student groups at the University and the College of Art. A new society known as the New Art Movement has also recently come into being with the object of showing Soviet films. In Dundee there was a film society full of enthusiasm and good ideas, but it was forced to cease operations owing to the interference of the local authorities, who took exception to the exhibition of Russian films. There is word of a new society being established in the university town of St. Andrews, and the recently formed Society for Cultural Relations with Soviet Russia in Edinburgh announces that it intends to hold cinema performances next winter.

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"A Generation of Motion Pictures". This is the title of one of the most important documents on films that we have ever encountered. The author is William H. Short. The publisher is The National Committee for Study of Social Values in Motion Pictures, located at 1 Madison Avenue, New York City. The book is a huge volume, filled with a mass of data and facts that conclusively prove the failure of the Hays organization to raise the American film-industry from the level of a racket to that of a cultural medium.

As a compilation of testimony against Hays, Mr. Short's volume is of inestimable value, a masterpiece of research, denunciation and indictment. As a revelation of the true character of the American film-industry it is priceless. As an historical survey of the hypocrisy, double-dealing and hell-bent intention of the producers to corrupt the taste and standards of the American public, it is richly informative, enlightening and frequently very amusing. The citations, the anecdote, incident and store of factual data, the protests against innumerable American films from every conceivable type of organization in the United States during the past twenty years, the dirty history of many a big box-office "hit" (a history not included in advertisements, ballyhoo, or books on "movie-entertainment") — all this, and a great deal more besides, makes Mr. Short's work the gold mine of reference and source-information that it is.

Having read this, you may be somewhat disappointed to learn that this important book is being

withheld from circulation. It is a jealously guarded and as effectively secluded from public gaze as a harem beauty in old Arabia. The editors of *Experimental Cinema* are not at liberty to say how they came to see the book, but it was certainly through no fault of the publishers.

We wrote to the publishers, desiring to purchase a copy, but we were told in a friendly, though cryptic, reply that "while there is nothing secret about the volume", we should note that "it is stamped as the property of this committee and for the examination only of the person whose name is written on it." The book, according to the same letter, was "prepared as a study of opinion regarding the social values of motion pictures for use of this committee only". The publishers furthermore declared that they hold themselves "in no wise responsible for the opinions noted in the volume, which is simply and frankly an analysis of what we were able to find". This letter was signed by William Short, the author and also the director of the committee.

Only a limited number of copies were printed, and these were selectively distributed. Just why the publishers should not wish to release so significant a document to the public at large, when it could be of so much aid in bursting a big American bubble, we are at a loss to explain. But perhaps the publishers, frightened at the potentialities of their own weapon, do not wish to burst bubbles. . . .

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